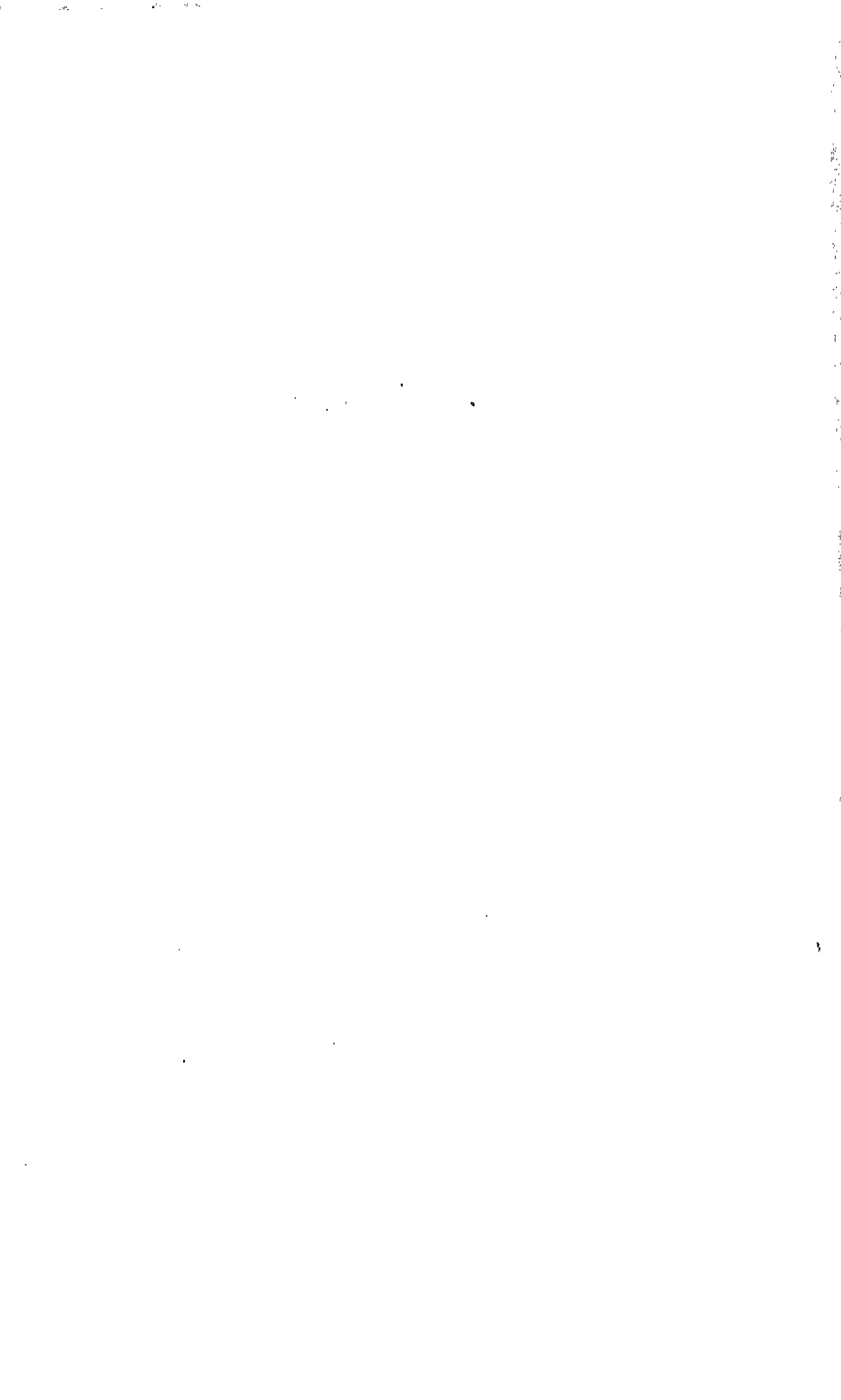
METAPHYSICS OF ADVAITA VEDANTA



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OF
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BY

GHANSHAMDAS RATTANMAL MALKANI
(*Director — Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*)



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PREFACE

It has long been my desire to write a book on Advaitic metaphysics, because I consider this system as the highest expression of Hindu philosophical thinking. For me at any rate, it is the purest philosophical truth beyond which it is not possible to go. It is a system which is bold in conception and uncompromising in its logic. It calls forth the subtlest intuitions of which man is capable, and promises the highest possible goal of life as the reward of knowledge. Those who criticise it first misunderstand it; for no-one can criticise self-evident truth. If you can rise to a stand-point higher than Advaita from where it can be criticised, it is almost a certainty that you have not grasped the truth of it. As a matter of fact, the whole effort in Advaita is to reach that knowledge of the truth which fulfils reason, which cannot be formulated in a position, and which cannot therefore be criticised. You either know the truth (in which case you become the truth) or you do not know it,—you cannot possibly stand above it and criticise it. When the knowledge arises, all puzzles and problems of thought must fall away. There is absolute certainty.

It is not my purpose in the following pages to convince the dissenter or the implacable critic; for it is not at all difficult for an outsider to pick holes in any system. As a matter of fact, no system can ever be perfect in this sense. It is bound to be more or less one-sided, and so open to criticism. Reason can find no end of argument and counter-argument if it so chooses. It can only be brought to a final acceptance when it is made to *see* the truth face to face. My principal object therefore is not to join issues with the hard and confirmed dissenter—who can certainly hold his own in a game of mere ideas—but to reach those who do not bring a hostile or prejudiced mind to bear on the subject, but who want to view the system sympathetically and from the inside before they finally decide to accept or to reject it.

It will not be difficult to see that my attitude to the subject is not that of the orientalist, who views ancient systems as really ancient, and so dead and past. What I want to expound is a *living* system, though ancient. My presentation again will not be *scholarly* or rooted in the original sanskrit texts and their commentaries. It will be a free presentation of a truth-seeker, who is more interested in the truth than in erudition or scholarship, and who believes what he says. My arguments may therefore be taken for what they are worth. They may be the arguments from the books, or they may not be on all-fours with them. They are essentially my arguments. Since I have not taken shelter behind any reputed author of Advaita Vedanta, it will be quite irrelevant to say that my views do not agree with those of any great giant in the field and are therefore to be rejected as not the genuine views on Advaita Vedanta. Many different people can understand this great system differently. I claim only a particular interpretation of it, which appeals to me most.

There are certain western philosophers who call themselves rationalists or idealists, who start with certain strictly defined concepts, which they think cannot be doubted and ought to be universally accepted. Out of these concepts, they develop a whole system of thought through a form of deductive reasoning. They then claim finality for their system. Evidently, such a rigid logical system cannot be partly true and partly false. It must be wholly so one way or the other. In fact, if the concepts with which we start are not accepted by us as anything more than purely subjective in character, the whole system topples down like a pack of cards. It has no relation to reality and can give us no knowledge about it. All such purely rationalistic systems are bound therefore to hang in mid-air as fine structures built by thought, but as flimsy and insubstantial as the web of the spider.

There are other philosophers who are most modest in their claims. They are empirically-minded. They think that no system of thought can be final. The way of thought is that of trial and error. It is a way of progressive approach to the truth. We can accordingly only asymptotically reach the truth, but never *wholly possess* it. It is a progressive, but at

the same time an endless, venture. We do not agree with this view either. Philosophy is not science. Finality is the very essence of it.

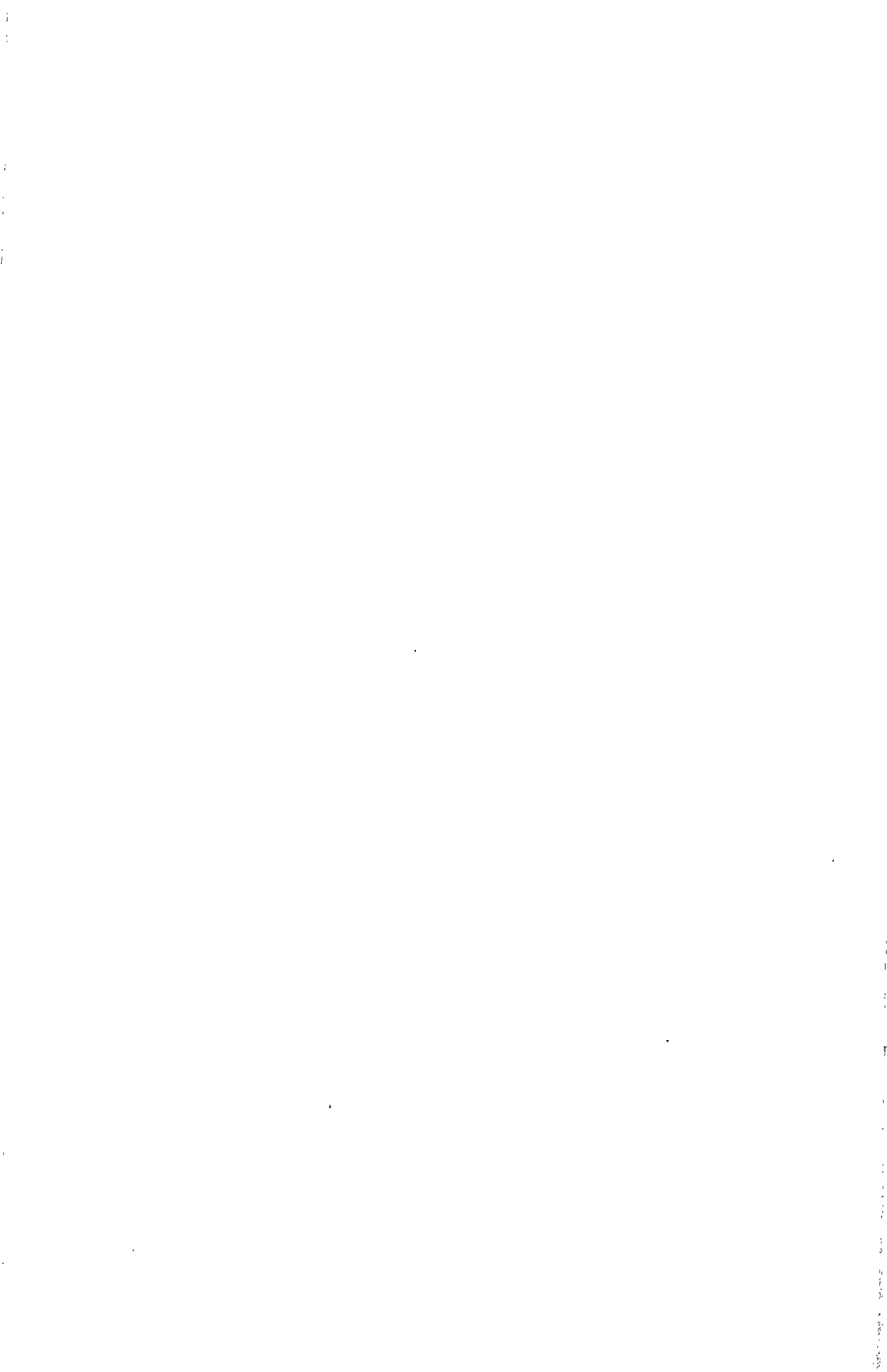
We must rise above pure logic and pure science. Finality is only possible with a species of direct knowledge, confirmed by reason, and consolidated by the will. It has more affinity with mysticism than with the judgmental form of knowledge with which we are familiar. Pure mysticism has no truth-value. It may be all imagination; and imagination is not a way of knowledge. Indeed, imagination can be, and often is, a sort of vision; as such, it has many uses in Sciences and in Arts. But imagination, at its best, is still a subjective way of looking at things. It is not *seeing* in the literal sense, but only in a metaphorical sense. What we demand for philosophy is seeing in a literal sense, recognised as such by reason itself. Reason has therefore a very important part to play in the knowledge which philosophy seeks. It alone can act as the watch-dog to make sure that we do not clothe reality in the drapery of subjective ideas and formulae as the sciences do, but that we know reality as it is *in itself*.

The Indian mind seeks, in philosophy, the highest form of spiritual satisfaction so far as Truth is concerned. It is with this all-important ideal in view that the following pages have been written. Absolute Truth is offered by many religions and many Idealistic systems of philosophy. But it is truth that is either *felt* or merely envisaged and imagined. It is not truth *as known*. In Advaita Vedanta, this *knowledge itself* becomes our main occupation. We believe that this desire for knowledge finds here its perfect fulfilment.

I must thank Prof. George B. Burch of Tufts University for encouraging me to write this book, Shri S. M. Chingle of the Indian Institute of Philosophy for helping me with the press proofs, and Srimant Pratapseth, the President of the Institute, for enabling me to send the book to the press.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

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Every philosophy is supposed to propound a system of concepts through which we can understand and interpret reality. Advaitism too is a system of philosophy in this sense. It accepts the challenge of thought to render reality as a whole intelligible in terms of certain concepts. There is such a thing as an Advaitic system.

A system of concepts however is not the goal of knowledge in Advaita. We cannot stop with it. It is at best a kind of symbolism through which we convey our ultimate meanings on the plane of thought. It is a different matter altogether to use this symbolism in order to know reality. To know reality mere concepts are not enough. We require a method of activating our intuitive apparatus. Something must lift thought to reality or open its eyes to reality. Since no normal agency of knowledge can achieve this, Advaitism has recourse to a supernormal method. This is the revealed word or *śrûti*. We know the ultimate metaphysical truth with the aid of certain upaniṣadic texts. Thus Advaitism is both a philosophy and a religion.

Our common understanding proceeds to knowledge on the basis of our sensible contact with reality. It is incapable of transcending this contact, unaided by a higher source of knowledge. This source can be no other than revealed religion. Whether it succeeds in imparting actual knowledge of a higher reality may be disputed. But like all matters religious, this too is not a matter of argument. It is a matter of faith. We have to rely on the testimony of those who have accepted this method and succeeded. Thus both the revealed word and tradition, the two important instruments of religion, have a necessary place in the Advaitic method of knowledge. Advaitism may therefore be said to be religion that

seeks perfect knowledge as its goal. It is the religion of knowledge.

Philosophy too in its best tradition seeks a higher kind of knowledge. It seeks knowledge which is absolutely certain and which is not open to cancellation by a later knowledge. It is, further, the knowledge of the ultimate ground of the known and the visible world. This ground is necessarily invisible, super-sensible and metaphysical. It is the higher reality that underlies all things and is the truth of all things. It is called by the upaniṣads *Brahman*. Thus to know Brahman is the goal of all metaphysics. Advaita Vedanta has the same goal.

Religion seeks a remedy for the ills of life. Most often it finds the cause of these ills in the maladjustments of man's emotional and volitional nature. It naturally therefore seeks to remove these maladjustments and put man right, both emotionally and volitionally, with the source of all life and things. Advaitism goes a step beyond this ordinary religion. It finds the ultimate cause of all our ills not in the said maladjustments, but in our ignorance of the truth. The remedy of all ills therefore is the knowledge of the truth, direct and certain. This knowledge has accordingly the highest value. Of all possible ideals of human achievement, it is the purest, the noblest and the most satisfying. Thus philosophy becomes, in Advaitism, the highest form of religion. It gives the saving knowledge, which leads to Absolute Freedom called *mokṣa*. This conception of philosophy differs fundamentally from the generally accepted western conception, according to which philosophy is a purely intellectual pursuit and can only satisfy a certain intellectual curiosity or a desire for the unification of all knowledge. In Indian philosophy, on the other hand, value is the very breath of philosophy. And what value can be greater than Freedom or Bliss?

Advaitism, we can truly say, has all the important elements of religion present in it,—faith in the scripture, discipleship, the goal of self-realization and all those inner qualities of moral purity which are necessary for the knowledge

of the Highest Spiritual Reality. Only it is not religion as ordinarily understood. It is not a religion of dogma. A dogma, unlike knowledge, is a challenge to reason. Its only justification lies in our emotional and volitional life. Truth needs no such justification. It transforms our emotions and our volitions by a necessity of its own nature. The religion of Truth thus supersedes all other religion.

Advaitism, like all great religions, proceeds on the assumption that empirical existence is a form of alienation or fall from our true and original state. It is therefore an evil which we must seek to transcend. All religion is in this sense pessimistic. It accepts the fact of present evil and the need to return to the original state of sinless purity, which is our true good. In fact, there is no need for a religion if our present embodied existence can appear to us as self-complete and also as valuable and satisfactory. What we want of a religion is a touch of the divine which will transform human life into a life divine. The only difference between Advaitism and other religions is its emphasis upon the method of release from empirical existence. It is not that we are *really fallen* and must rise again. If once we can fall, what guarantee is there that we shall not fall again and again? The contention of Advaitism is that we are not fallen at all. We are *by nature* divine—and nothing can change that nature, even as we cannot change the nature of fire to burn. Our true Self is essentially self-luminous and blissful. Only our embodiedness, which itself is a result of ignorance, has covered up this nature and made it appear different from what it really is. We take on the attributes of the body and the sense-mind, and that is the cause of all evil. We are thus *alienated* from our real Self through *ignorance* alone, and become subject to all the ills of the body and the mind. When knowledge arises, it puts an end to all suffering. Our release is complete and final. It is complete and final, because our true Freedom is our permanent possession, lost to us only through ignorance. It is the nature of ignorance that it has no cause beyond itself. It does not *begin to be*. It is causeless and beginningless (*anādi*). But it can be dispelled; and

when it is dispelled, it is dispelled for good. It cannot *recur*. Knowledge is invariably and necessarily preceded by ignorance; but ignorance is equally invariably and necessarily *not* preceded by knowledge. Once therefore knowledge arises, there is a complete and final end of ignorance and of all the ills that arise from it. Empirical existence is at an end at all possible levels. It simply cannot come back.

Knowledge is to be distinguished from belief. Belief is an intellectual attitude supported by the will. Beliefs may be true. But until knowledge comes, they cannot be known to be true; and then they are replaced by knowledge. There is no element of supposition in knowledge as there is in belief. Knowledge proper is therefore always true. It is the element of supposition that makes for error. True knowledge is a direct awareness of reality as reality is. Short of this, we do not have knowledge, but 'opinion' or 'belief', etc. It is the contention of Advaita Vedanta that there is only one form of knowledge, the knowledge of Brahman, which has the character of literal truth. To know Brahman is to have life in the Truth. All religions seek this kind of life. But they cannot achieve it in full measure without knowledge. In the alternative, they can only prepare the aspirant for this knowledge through purificatory methods and emotional adjustments.

It may be argued both by men of religion and philosophers that knowledge of metaphysical reality or of God is not possible; and even if some-one says that it is possible, it is not fundamental to religion. Religion can stop with belief; and a belief can be true. There can be propositions which are true, although we can see no way of obtaining evidence either for or against them. As some-one has said, "Sentences may be true in virtue of a relation to one or more unobserved facts, and the relation is the same as that which makes sentences true when they concern observed facts."

We contend that in the absence of knowledge, we naturally support an intellectual attitude to super-sensible reality

through belief or faith. But this is bound by its very nature to be a transitory state. No-one can permanently rest in faith. Faith demands to be transformed into knowledge and is only justified by knowledge. Till this justification is forthcoming, there is bound to remain in faith an element of doubt. Doubt is indicative not only of inadequate knowledge, but also of the subjectivity of it. The truth of faith or of belief is thus practical only. Knowledge alone is primarily and literally true. As long as knowledge has not arisen, the truth of belief is necessarily in doubt. It is therefore a necessity of our intellectual life that we must rise above the subjectivity of belief to the objectivity of truth. Advaita Vedanta enables us to do so.

CHAPTER II

THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE

Advaita Vedanta seeks the higher metaphysical knowledge. The means for the attainment of this knowledge are both mediate and immediate, both ethical and non-ethical. Every kind of knowledge requires a person duly qualified. The highest kind of knowledge naturally requires the very highest qualifications. Indeed, knowledge can be verbally communicated to any-one who seeks it. But not every-one can profit by it. Advaita Vedanta, unlike western systems of philosophy, enjoins therefore a sort of moral or spiritual discipline which alone can give us the proper *frame of mind* for an enquiry into the nature of Ultimate Reality.

The knowledge of Brahman called *Brahmavidyā* is not mere knowledge of the ordinary intellectual variety. It is this no doubt. It will satisfy the intellect by all the rules of the intellect. But it is more. It satisfies the whole man. In particular, it satisfies the highest spiritual aspirations of man. If therefore we do not possess the right qualifications, we may get a sort of knowledge, but not the *value* of it. It is only in this sense that Brahma-vidyā is called a *secret science,* not to be imparted to the outsider, much less to a scoffer. It is to be imparted by the *guru* to the disciple, after making certain about the latter's fitness. If a man, for instance, is seeking the joys of this world or of a possible next world or heaven, he lacks the right frame of mind for the saving knowledge. The knowledge which is to release us from *all* empirical existence cannot be attained by a person who is simply looking forward to a prolongation of this very existence on a different scale and in a different form. We must therefore cultivate a *positive distaste* for all so-called joys of the present as well as of any future existence in heaven. These joys are seductive in form, but they only help to confirm that ignorance which is the cause of all our ills. We must renounce all the so-called "goods" of this world as

well as of the hereafter as obstacles in the path. This is *vairāgya*.

Again, our present understanding is sense-ridden and gross. It must be purified to a finer instrument through control of all sensuous appetites, through withdrawal from all objects of desire, and through mental equilibrium and poise. It will then be able to discriminate between the real and the non-real, and between the eternal and the non-eternal (*nityānityavastûviveka*). In other words, a true philosopher must be dispassionate and discriminating.

Lastly, there must be a *burning desire* for that knowledge which alone can release the individual from all bondage (*mumukṣā*). Only a person who has no use for all possible joys of life can really have this desire. He regards life itself as an evil. His pessimism is thorough-going and complete. But it is not an end in itself. It is only a means to an end. The end is victory over all the ills of life, including death itself. It is nothing short of immortality and eternal joy.

All the above-mentioned qualifications are moral or spiritual in character and can be achieved through the regulation of our feeling and our will. They are therefore the mediate means of knowledge. They may be present in a high degree. But they cannot of themselves lead to knowledge. They merely prepare the ground for it. What alone can lead to knowledge is the relevant method or *pramāṇa*. If the *pramāṇa* is present and operative, knowledge arises automatically. When sense-organs, for instance, operate with regard to sensible objects, knowledge cannot be delayed. The same is true of other *pramāṇās*, such as inference in its various forms. In addition to these common methods of knowledge, revealed word or *śrûti* is also recognised.

All knowledge presupposes three things: (a) Some reality to be known. (b) Ignorance of that reality. (c) A *pramāṇa* or method for dispelling the ignorance. If any of these conditions is lacking, knowledge is impossible. But if they are all fulfilled, knowledge is automatic. If philosophy

is therefore to give us any knowledge, we must decide, to begin with, what sort of reality we want to know and what is the method appropriate to it.

Philosophy is not science. Science studies the laws of nature. Whatever its procedures, they are quite adequate for its own special purposes. In philosophy, we seek to go beyond nature. May be, there is a cause of nature outside nature, often called the First Cause. May be, nature is grounded in a super-sensible reality which somehow contains it. May be, nature is a closed system and there is nothing outside nature which can explain nature. What is certain is that science is not competent to decide these questions. When a scientist begins to speculate on these matters, he has gone beyond science and turned a philosopher. It is the privilege of philosophy to analyse all our knowledge, including scientific knowledge, in order to see what indications it contains of a higher and super-sensible reality and how this reality could be known.

There are some European philosophers who propose to dispose of the metaphysical problem in a rather cheap way. They argue that our only contact with reality is sense-contact. Knowledge based on this contact is exhausted by science. There is therefore no metaphysical problem at all. Philosophy has too long engaged itself in the pursuit of metaphysical truth. It is time we brought it from heaven to earth and made it realize the fictitious character of all its problems. They are not real problems. They are the products of linguistic confusions only. This is positivism in philosophy. We may call it positivistic dogmatism. For it is nothing but a dogma to suppose that all our knowledge of reality is restricted to sense-contact, and that no other knowledge is possible. A philosopher needs to be omniscient before he can rule out any such possibility. All we can say about him is that he is not prepared to play the game,—the noble game that is philosophy.

There are other philosophers who argue that although we know only nature, we have quite a legitimate problem

about metaphysical reality. But if the problem is there, it will be another form of dogmatism to say that it is insoluble. Only an illegitimate problem is really insoluble,—or better still, it is soluble only by bringing out its illegitimate character. Kant accepted a metaphysical thing-in-itself. Although he declared it to be unknowable by its very nature, others who came after him tried to give a more concrete meaning to it and to know it in their own way. Some took their stand on the nature of thought, others on a kind of blind cosmic will, and yet others on the Absolute of feeling. Evidently, this kind of thinking, which relies upon some aspect of our experience, cannot be said to be knowledge in a literal sense. It is only speculation. The philosopher here is free to build some picture of ultimate metaphysical reality in accordance with his own predilections. There is no question of any *pramāṇa*.

Advaita Vedanta seeks metaphysical knowledge in a very literal sense. For this a new method of knowledge is necessary. Advaita Vedantic finds it in the revealed word or *śrûti*. The potency of the word to convey meaning is clearly without limit. Even the impossible and the self-contradictory which challenges thought can be conveyed by the word. There is nothing on earth or in heaven that the word cannot convey. Even the statement "there are a hundred elephants fighting in my ear" is quite intelligible. Why cannot the word convey to our understanding the knowledge of something which exists beyond the physical world? True, in the initial stages, our knowledge may be wholly negative. But it may also elicit, on the basis of a wider experience than the sensible experience, a positive intuition of super-sensible reality. Our knowledge of the self, for instance, is not based on any sensible intuition. It is a mixed intuition. Even a sensible intuition has more in it than what appears to the senses. A discerning mind finds evidence of metaphysical reality almost in all things that we know. The word does no more than direct our attention to it and enable us to recognise it for what it is.

The revealed word or *śrûti* is the word that is *heard,* never coined or made by the mind of man. It has a special position in Indian philosophy. It is not the word of any person,—sage, seer or mystic. It is not even the word of God, for God is conceived as a person. The word is above and beyond the person. It is something essentially impersonal. It is prior to all created things. It is in a sense as eternal as the truth itself.

Certain questions will naturally arise here. The word can only offer us a dogma. We accept the authority of the word and we believe in the truth of it. But belief is not knowledge. Even if we suppose that the word gives us knowledge of metaphysical reality, it cannot be *direct knowledge.* We just know on the authority of the word that there is such a thing as described by the scripture. Such indirect knowledge however is not genuine knowledge at all.

Indirect knowledge is knowledge which is based on some authority or upon an observed concomitance (*vyāptī*). Both these forms of knowledge can be questioned. Even if they give the truth, our knowledge of it can only be general in character. We do not know *the thing,* but only the *kind* of thing. Direct knowledge corrects both these defects. It alone can give absolute certainty. Seeing is believing. We sometimes no doubt question our eyes whether they see properly (particularly when we are confronted by something miraculous or strange); but then all we can say is that the knowledge in question is not direct enough. It is still mediated knowledge. We implicitly believe that the eyes can deceive. The ideal of knowledge can only be fulfilled when nothing in the form of sense or judgmental thought mediates between the thing and our awareness of the thing. Such knowledge alone can be said to know *the thing itself.* It is necessarily super-sensuous and super-rational. It is in the best sense direct and intuitive.

Can the word give this knowledge? We contend that it can. It is the very nature of the word to give direct know-

ledge where the thing itself is directly present, and to give indirect knowledge where the thing itself is absent. If I say to another, "there is a tree on the other side of the river, and there are five mangoes hanging from it", the hearer cannot verify the statement directly. He can only believe in it, if he considers my word to be more or less reliable. Here the word gives indirect knowledge, for the thing referred to is not directly present. But if I say to another, "this is the same Deva Datta you met at Kashi a year ago", the word gives direct knowledge to the hearer, because Deva Datta is directly present to him but unrecognised. The same is true when the word is said to give knowledge of metaphysical reality. If this reality is ever present by its very nature to the individual who seeks to know it, the word will give direct knowledge. But if it is not present and it is distant,—a sort of God in Heaven,—the word can only give indirect knowledge.

The question now arises, but is the word *sufficient* for the purpose of metaphysical knowledge? If it were, there should be no controversy about metaphysical truth even as there is no controversy about sense-data. In point of fact, there are differences of opinion, and rarely any unanimity, even among those who accept the word as authoritative. We now contend that while the word is sufficient to give direct knowledge, it is not sufficient to remove all our doubts, which make this knowledge almost useless and ineffective in life. There is a doubt about the correct interpretation of scriptural statements. This doubt can only be removed through a species of reasoning based on the rules of correct interpretation. When we have got at the right interpretation which gives unity and significance to all scriptural statements which may even be apparently conflicting, another form of doubt assails us. Can the scripture be after all true? Does it make sense in our experience which seems to be at variance with it? This question can only be resolved through a thorough-going analysis and re-interpretation of the relevant experience. Here reason can raise all kinds of difficulties and objections that legitimately arise in a reflective mind, that

seeks to accept nothing on mere faith and that is bent on seeing the truth for itself. This is philosophy proper, where reason is used constructively for the elucidation of truth in experience. The crowning phase of knowledge is reached, when the one remaining obstacle is also removed. The mind, though rationally convinced, is prone to waver on account of wrong habits of thought. It is hesitant and uncertain. It is unable to assimilate a truth which is wholly opposed to common-sense. Argument here is of no avail. It is the slothfulness of the mind that is in the way. A spiritual process of one-pointed contemplation becomes necessary. When it reaches a high degree of steadiness and perfection, metaphysical knowledge becomes a living thing. It can now bear its fullest fruit. A succession of living philosophers who have realized the truth keeps the tradition alive. But for them, it would perhaps die a natural death for want of true exponents and teachers.

The different steps, leading to actual knowledge, may be summed up as follows: First, hearing the truth (*śravaṇa*); then reflection (*manana*); and finally, contemplation (*nididhyāsana*). Each step logically leads to the next one, till knowledge is perfected. The only real antidote against both scepticism and dogmatism is direct and absolutely certain knowledge. This is the goal of true philosophy. When this goal is realized, the knot of the heart is resolved and all doubts disappear.

CHAPTER III

THE NOTION OF "REALITY"

The notion of reality cannot be defined. It is simple and unanalysable. We can only give its verbal equivalents, not its constituent parts. But while the notion is easily intelligible and offers no problem, the gap between it and things is not easy to bridge. We have accordingly a problem about the things that deserve to be called 'real'. We cannot solve this problem by merely inspecting the things that make this claim in our common discourse. There is no problem about things making the claim,—even non-real things can, and do, make the claim. There is a problem only about the *justification* of the claim. It is quite a legitimate question to ask, *what* is real?

The term 'real' is often used in western philosophy in a very wide sense. All thinkables, such as universals, relations, propositions, etc., are said to be real. We do not use the term in this very general sense. Thinkables do not claim to exist simply or in their own right. They do not exist at all. They are what they are only as they are thought. Reality, on the other hand, is beyond thought. It may be thought or it may not be thought, it may be known or it may not be known. It is independent of every subjective activity. May be, nothing exists in this sense. May be, reality in its ultimate and concrete form is subject-object or it is of the stuff of experience, so that nothing can possibly exist without relation to experience. We put all such views for the present aside. They do not do justice to what we *mean* by reality. Reality is defined by knowledge; and the only object fit for knowledge is the object that exists prior to it and independent of it. By this rule, Kant's phenomenal reality is not reality, but his thing-in-itself is reality *par excellence*. Also, things that are real are real in the same sense or real absolutely. Nothing can be more or less real. There are no degrees of reality.

Certain European philosophers use the term 'real' not to designate that which exists *in itself,* but as a *criterion adjective.* We may say that something is real, if it satisfies the criterion of sense-perception, or the criterion of coherence and inclusiveness, or the criterion of value, or the criterion of power and efficiency, etc. Evidently, different people can use different criteria. They are all purely subjective. They have no necessary relation to what *is* in the simple sense of the term. What however does so exist will be common to all men. It will not be subjective. We can err in respect of it; and we can err, because the thing is *in-itself,* while our knowledge of it can be infected with subjectivity.

In order to determine what is real in this sense which is common to all, we must begin where our agreement is likely to be the easiest. We can say that the one common quality of all things that are said to exist in a simple sense is "relatedness to time". Anything that comes to be related to time, whether physical or mental, is said to exist. If that is so, only events or occurrences can be real. We hypostatise events and call them *things.* Trees and houses, pots and chairs, etc., are called substances. But their substantival character is clearly fictitious. Our sense-organs and our thought can only apprehend static things or substances, not processes. Some modern thinkers have therefore decided against the notion of substance altogether, and substituted the notion of event for it.

Let it be granted that the real is necessarily temporal or that it partakes of the nature of an event. But can we really keep the concept of "event" completely free from the concept of "substance"? An event, whatever its duration, is a unified whole. It is apprehended as a single entity, substantival in form. Indeed, every event is divisible into events; and this process can be carried on indefinitely. But every such division is a substance of a sort. It stands over against the apprehension of it as something unchanging and standing. The limit can only be reached in what is called an instantaneous event or a point-event which cannot be

further subdivided. This limiting event is clearly a sort of a monad. There is no change or movement within it. It is what we understand by substance. We thus find that if we know anything, we know substance only. Reality is in this sense essentially substantival.

It may here be argued that our analysis of an event into a series of substances is not true. An event is nothing static. It is essentially fluid and changing. The static character that we apprehend is created by our thought only. It must be resolved back into the process. But then what we get as a result is pure fluidity, in which nothing can be said to occur or happen and there are no events. A happening has necessarily a static sort of being. If nothing *stands,* nothing can be grasped as an entity of any kind. Even a process has therefore to be broken up into a string of more or less finished occurrents. There can be no process in which nothing emerges. We know a process only as a maturing process or as a running down process, ascending or descending, winding and unwinding, building or unbuilding, etc. All these characters of the process introduce static elements in it. More than that. When we say that something comes to birth, grows, matures, declines and finally goes out, we necessarily posit an underlying unity of substance behind the whole process. We can truly say here that change lives and thrives upon the unchanging. This is also the case in the *perception* of change, which involves the immutable self. The self alone can bring together different moments into the unity of a single process or event. For all these reasons, we make bold to say that change is an appearance, while substance is the reality. Take away substance in all its forms, and change collapses. Substance is the only fit object of knowledge. It is the reality.

A process is said to be creative of substances or an appearance of substances. We reverse this sequence. Only a substance can be creative. The process is what is itself put forth. We can legitimately ask, what puts forth the process? That which puts forth must stand outside the

process,—it can be no part of the process. Only a substance can in this sense be really efficient and creative. It can be said to act. The process is only a materialization of its creative power. There is nothing in the process itself that can act or create. But if that is so, substance stands outside the process and therefore *essentially unrelated to time.* It creates time itself which is the necessary form of all process.

We contend that relatedness to time cannot be the defining character of reality. To be related to time is to be born or brought into being. A true substance is not brought into being. Certain things are certainly brought into being and they have the appearance of substance. But are they real? Can the real come into being? If it does, how do we understand the transition from non-being to being? Something cannot come out of nothing. Out of nothing,—nothing. When therefore something does appear to come out of its own non-being, there is a problem. Can it be reality or only appearance? An appearance can come out of nothing, because it is non-existent in all the three times. It is non-existent in the beginning and non-existent in the end; it appears only in the middle. What it needs is some other reality in which it appears, but which itself is not an appearance. It comes out of this reality, stays in this reality, and finally disappears into it. Here is the clearest distinction of appearance and reality. An appearance is born, reality never.

We do not dispute the fact that things do happen or come to birth, and we also take them to be real. But we can quite legitimately dispute their ontological status. In the nature of things, being will always remain being, and non-being non-being. An appearance of being can be created out of non-being only through some creative power conceived on the pattern of the will. What is primarily willed is never a thing, but only an act. The thing is only the end product of the act or the point where the act achieves a static pose. A real thing is never created by any act of the will.

Certain conclusions follow: (a) A substance alone creates if anything creates, and a substance is never itself created. (b) What is created through an act of the will is an appearance of substance, never real substance. (c) What is born must pass away. It passes away when the creative activity which puts it forth achieves its fulfilment. In this sense we can say that the birth of a thing is also its death. (d) There must be a substantival reality behind the will. It can put forth and also retract. It is qualitatively distinct from the act and what the act creates. It is unchanging and immutable. (e) This unchanging and immutable substance must be an intelligent self; and what it creates must be of the nature of unintelligent matter. Intelligent being can never be created. If man is essentially intelligent in his own being, he can never be created. He is among the immortals. Matter, on the other hand, is necessarily created, and has only a dependent sort of being. (f) The will must be distinguished from the being of which it is said to be the will. This being is intelligent and free by its very nature. The will, on the other hand, has only a borrowed intelligence and a borrowed freedom.

It is now evident that all things in time, and therefore the whole changing and moving world, cannot be real in our sense of the term. They are created. They are unintelligent. They are unsubstantial. The apparent substantiality of things is derived from a real substance behind them and which shows through them. The individual too is substance, and an intelligent substance, in his own essential being. The ground of the world we call by the name of *Brahman,* which literally means the Great. The ground of the individual we call *ātman* or the intelligent Self. Advaita Vedanta conveys the higher knowledge to us by pointing to their identity.

All things born are mere appearance. Or in the words of scripture, being born is a sign of illusoriness (*janyatvameva janyasya-māyīkatvā-samarpakam*). Reality, on the other hand, must be out of time or existent in all the three times (*trikālābādhita*).

CHAPTER IV

BEING

The term 'real' is generally used adjectivally. When it is so used, it may be understood as a criterion-adjective. But this use is not quite legitimate. A thing must *be* before it can have an adjective. But what sort of distinction can the adjective "real" confer upon it? If a thing *is* or *exists,* its reality is already taken for granted. We cannot add any further reality to it. An adjective is an accident; and 'reality' cannot be an accident of what *must exist* in order to have any accidents at all. And then what is the adjective 'real' to distinguish a thing from? One real thing can only be distinguished from another real thing. But then being or reality is already common to them,—it cannot distinguish either of them. Lastly, it is the thing that lends its reality to the adjective, not vice-versa. For all these reasons, the adjectival use of the term 'being' or 'reality' would appear to be unwarranted. Perhaps it will be more in the fitness of things if being is treated as substance, and everything else about a thing as adjectival to being.

It may now be said that our argument is leading us into the wilderness. Being or reality must attach itself to something. Some content or other alone can be said to have being. Take away all content, and nothing is left which can be said to be real. Can we say that pure being is left? But pure being without any content whatsoever is indistinguishable from non-being. Something alone exists, and this something must be a thinkable content distinguishable from some other content. It is therefore natural to ask, *what* is real?, and to state in reply,—*this* or *that* thing is real.

Let us suppose that this is so. But then what does the adjective "real" distinguish a thing from? It cannot distinguish a thing from nothing or non-being; for non-being is

not an entity of any kind. Only one *kind* of being can be distinguished from another *kind* of being, or one thing can be distinguished from another thing. But then being is common to them both. All distinctions are *within being*. Nonbeing can exercise no limitation on being or restrict it in any way. If anything exercises a limitation, it becomes on that very account another kind of being. In other words, one thing can limit another thing, one adjective can limit another adjective, but being as such can neither limit nor be limited. It is the one pervasive ground of all distinctions and all limitations of things. It is in very literal sense the one universal substance, unlimited and infinite. All so-called substances which can be distinguished one from another are so many particularizations of Being and can therefore truly be spoken of as adjectival to it.

An adjective must distinguish; and if it is to distinguish, it must be recognisable on inspection. It must be an empirical character. The so-called character of 'reality' or 'being' is not an empirical character. It cannot be known on inspection. If it could be thus known, an error about the being of anything would never occur; or if it occurred, it could be corrected directly on inspection. But that is never the case. When we know a thing, no amount of inspection will tell us whether it really exists or not. We shall have to go over to another piece of knowledge or cancelling knowledge. That alone can reveal the error. The process of cancellation can be continued almost indefinitely. The limit is only reached in a new species of knowledge which reveals the truth absolutely and is not itself open to cancellation.

The truth is that the so-called adjective of reality or being cannot be isolated, separated or distinguished from that to which it is supposed to belong and from other adjectives of the thing. If it could be distinguished, what would be the status of the thing and its other adjectives? Would they not be lacking all being?

We do not improve matters by arguing that the term "reality" must be used as a criterion adjective; for a criterion

adjective presupposes the *reality* of that which is evaluated in terms of the criterion. There is thus a *primary sense* of reality which is presupposed by every criterion. Reality or being is a more fundamental concept than any adjective of evaluation. Reality is what we seek to know, and it is the object of true knowledge. There is nothing subjective about it. But a criterion is nothing if it is not subjective. Different people can have different criteria and can evaluate things differently.

We contend that being or reality is a substance concept, not an adjective concept. When we say that A exists or is real, we say nothing *about* A. We merely say that A is substance and can sustain certain adjectives. We can make significant assertions about A,—it is such and such. Being is in this sense the only ultimate substance, and everything that we know about things is adjectival to it.

Ordinarily we distinguish many substances. But these distinctions do not relate to substance as substance. A substance is distinguished only through its adjectives. But then what is it *in itself?* Can it be *distinct in itself?* Nothing can be distinct in itself and without the qualifying adjectives. In itself, a thing can only be distinctionless being or pure being. There is therefore no question of there being *many* things-in-themselves. There can only be *one* thing-in-itself, and that thing-in-itself can be nothing other than distinctionless pure being. The momennt a thing is distinct, it is naturally differentiated into substance and its adjectives, and the two fall apart as having no *necessary* relationship. Substance is the undifferentiated pure being, and adjective is an adjunct which is only falsely superimposed upon it. Pure being is in this sense the one pervasive ground of all things. It is the only reality, the only *thing-in-itself*. Everything else, which forms part of our experience, is adjectival to it. The adjective is what *we* apprehend *in* the thing. It is *part of our knowledge*. It is *ideal* in character. The thing-in-itself is not part of our knowledge, and it is not ideal in character. It is independent of our thought and will.

It is *uncreated.* It is *the one in the many.* It is of the nature of pure being. The differences are all conceived by thought and are the products of thought. They are incorporated within reality through sheer error. It is as though certain ideas non-existent in themselves, get incorporated in pure being, which is real in itself, through error of the percipient mind. It is a reversal of the whole Platonic philosophy, which conceived ideas as existing in themselves and as constituting the sole ultimate reality.

Let us suppose that pure being is the reality and that there is no other reality. If that is so, it should be possible to know pure being as such. But we never know pure being. We only know some specific kind of being, or being with a difference. As we say, something is or exists, *and has a quality.* This qualified being alone is real and concrete being, which we do and can know. Pure being appears only an abstraction from the being that we actually know.

We now contend that our actual knowledge is all erroneous knowledge. Thought has imposed its own ideas and its own categories upon reality. It does not know reality as such, unmixed with subjectivity. It is not true knowledge or knowledge which is determined by reality and reality alone. In order to get at this knowledge, we must negate the error. This consists in negating all characters of a thing and all those relations which are based on those characters. When all characters and all relations are negated, objectivity itself is negated; for what is an object apart from the characters and the relations? In other words, we negate the object as such. Reality is *not this* that you know. Whatever you know of a thing is conceptual and false. It is not the reality. Reality is pure characterless being,—and this is never an object. But then do we know pure objectless being?

This brings us to the positive approach. Mere negation cannot lead to the reality. It merely prepares the way for it. Ultimately, there must be something that we do directly know or intuit as pure characterless and objectless being.

We now contend that there is this kind of being, and that we can also claim to know it. It is the true self, which is never an object, and which we only know as absolutely opposed to objectivity as such. We have an intuition of our own self as "I" opposed to "this" *in all its forms.* The true "I" can never be apprehended as "this" or as a *correlative of this.* Whatever can be so apprehended is an object of some sort. It is not the seer of the object. The seer of the object is by its very nature non-empirical or transcendental. By this we do not mean that it is not known at all. We also do not mean that it is only a logical presupposition of all knowledge. A logical presupposition must be based on introspective evidence. What this evidence reveals is nothing logical, but a certain form of the subject called "I" which is present in all knowledge. We know this form objectively when we reflect upon knowledge. The real subject or the self is beyond the form, and it is of the nature of formless being.

We can claim that we have a sort of direct intuition of this self when we distinguish it absolutely from all forms of the object, both subjective and objective. Since it is no kind of object, it is free from all the limitations of objectivity? It can have no characters and no relations. It is not presentable to thought and not knowable in the objective attitude. There is nothing ideal or subjective about it. It is *the reality* in very literal sense. It answers best to the requirements of pure unqualified being. Indeed, in our attempts to know it, we do objectify it in a way. But then we are quite aware, on reflection, that this objectivity is a derived objectivity. It can be traced to the limitations of our method of knowledge. We seek to know everything, even God or the Absolute, as we know the world, i.e. as object of some sort. But a little discrimination in this case will soon correct our error.

Here then is a point of departure in our knowledge. The intuition of the self provides a new dimension of reality. To begin with, this intuition may be mixed. But it contains within itself the self-revelation of the true self, and therefore

a clear indication of the way it can be purified. When this process is completed, we shall get the true knowledge that we seek. We shall no longer complain that being, pure and unqualified, is a mere abstraction or a myth. Here is something that is very very real, and at the same time it has no quality and no relation and is quite indistinguishable from pure being. Pure being may be merely an idea for the untutored mind. It is not that for the discerning mind. For the latter, it is the most potent spiritual reality. The self is the pointer. There is no distinction between pure and pervasive being and the inmost Self.

CHAPTER V

SELF-EFFULGENCE

We have tried to show that pure unqualified Being is Substance. It is all-pervasive, non-temporal and eternal. It is the Great. We have also said that reality is that which we are said to know; and conversely, knowledge is of the real alone. The question naturally arises, what is that knowledge which gives us the Real. We seem to know many things. We know nature. We know other individuals. We know our own self, etc. Is all this knowledge genuine, and does it give us reality?

It appears that some of our knowledge at least is genuine. Let us take the knowledge of nature. It has the peculiarity that the object of it is *given* to us in sense-experience. What is given is not what we ourselves make or manufacture. It exists independently of us. It exists prior to our knowledge of it; and when our knowledge is ended, that which is given in it is not ended. It is the reality. Knowledge is adventitious to reality. Reality may be known, or it may not be known, or known differently. Reality itself is not affected by knowledge, whether true or false. Only true knowledge reveals reality for what it is, while false knowledge reveals it with a false attribute.

We have referred to sense-perception as a case of true knowledge. It appears to us, however, that sense-perception offers a problem. We are by no means all agreed about its true significance. A critical mind finds some difficulty in accepting it as true.

We seem to deduce in a facile way the independence of the thing known from its given-ness in perception. But is this quite correct? What is perceived has a necessary relation to the perception of it. There is no evidence in perceptual knowledge that what is perceived of a thing exists independently of perception. It is one thing to say that *some-*

thing must exist before it can be perceived. It is another thing to say that what we perceive of a thing must form part of the thing. What we perceive is relative to the perception, but the thing itself that is said to be known is not so relative. As soon as therefore we raise the question, what is the nature of that reality which is given in perception?, we are on the horns of a dilemma. If what is given in perception is strictly the percept, the latter cannot be said to have any independent existence. It is not the reality. But, on the other hand, if what is given is the independent and unrelated thing, the latter is not strictly perceived; or if it is perceived in some sense, its sensuous attribute does not really belong to it and must be negated. Perception as a species of true knowledge is not proved and is open to question.

We can also raise this question in a slightly different form: How can perception transcend itself and inform us about something which does not form a part of the actual object perceived? The independence of the object or its self-existence and reality do not form such a part. They go beyond the object of perception. This object may exist or may not even exist by our common standards. It may be real or may not be real. The fact of erroneous perception cannot be denied. But how and where can we draw the line between a perception which is erroneous and one which is not? We cannot draw the line by the internal evidence of perception itself. We shall have to bring in extraneous considerations of other perceptions, which suffer from the same defect. It is therefore quite misleading to say that perceptual knowledge can provide the evidence for its own truth. As a matter of fact, *in this sphere of knowledge,* truth looks like falsehood and vice-versa. The potency of perception to inform us about things that exist independently of it or as unknown or as real can only be a form of illusion. To perceive x has become tantamount to perceiving *x as existing independently of perception.* Can we be really in doubt about the delusive role of this species of knowledge? We may no doubt accept its truth for practical purposes. But if we are theoretically-minded and assume the role of a critical

philosopher, there is undoubted scope for questioning it and doubting its veridical character. Seeing is "believing" for the man in the street. Seeing is "doubting" for the philosopher. The cause of doubt and error is subjectivity in knowledge; and subjectivity in knowledge is inimical to its truth.

True knowledge must not rely upon another piece of knowledge for confirmation. Many false witnesses do not make for truth. True knowledge must be self-evidently true, and one piece of knowledge ought to suffice for the purpose. This species of knowledge is therefore qualitatively different. It is different, because it is not mediated by the senses and the understanding. Knowledge which is not mediated is not open to cancellation or *bādha*. It is necessarily true. The problem of reality thus becomes the problem of truth. Is there any piece of knowledge which is true in the sense here set forth? If there is, it alone will reveal reality for what it is. If there is not, we have no right to speak of reality in any significant sense, acceptable to the theoretical consciousness of man.

It is important to note here that what we are seeking is not an uncommon intuition or mystic intuition of reality. Philosophy has no use for it, even if it is possible. Philosophy takes its stand upon those intuitions only which are available to the reflective consciousness of the ordinary man. But if that is so, what is important in order to get at the truth is not the form of intuition which we have evolved, but the form of the reality intuited by us. It is the reality that determines the form of its knowledge, not vice-versa. Nature, for instance, can only be known mediately; and in mediate knowledge it is the subject that determines the object. Knowledge of nature cannot therefore be true knowledge in the best of circumstances. Knowledge will be true only if there is some other kind of reality, which cannot fail, by its very nature, to communicate itself directly, and so truly, to our thought or *buddhi* or the subject. It is therefore quite possible to argue that nature, as inert and non-

spiritual, is a mere creation of the subject; but the same nature, as the underlying Spirit, is always known truly.

We suggest that the reality that can be truly known by us must be, as contrasted with physical reality, a kind of spiritual reality. A spiritual reality is essentially an intelligent reality. A reality is intelligent when it knows. It knows whatever is given to it or presented to it. But that is only one side of its nature. Its other side is that it is not presented to another or known by another. The moment it is known by another, it becomes non-intelligent or *jada.* It becomes part of nature. It ceases to be spirit. The true spirit knows, but is not known.

What is not known is nothing at all. How can it be the object of true knowledge? There is however a difference. What is merely not known, such as the horn of a hare, is certainly nothing. But what knows and is not itself knowable is intelligent reality, that is self-revealing to thought by its very nature and is always capable of being *spoken* as something that is absolutely *immediate.* It is spoken as "I". Since it is self-revealing, we have merely to turn our attention to it and we shall recognise it for what it is. We shall find that it is the ultimate intelligent subject which can never be made our object. If it is known at all, it is known as what is never to be known. It is absolutely opposed in nature to every form of objectivity, including the objectivity of the ego or the empirical self. The intelligent self is no kind of object. Our *supposed knowledge* of it is therefore to be replaced by our *speaking it* as quite immediate.

We can doubt what is mediately known or known as some kind of object or other. We cannot doubt what is not given as object of any kind. Everybody understands what the *speaking I* stands for without confusing it with any socialised object or what may be called *this.* Here then is a new kind of reality. Both the speaker and the hearer perfectly understand what the *speaking I* stands for without seeking its exemplification in any known object. This is

because the *speaking I* reveals itself for what it is,—as absolutely opposed to all forms of the object or to *this-ness.*

That we confuse the intelligent self with forms of objectivity may be admitted. It is because of this confusion that it takes on the form of particularity or individuality. It becomes *a self* and *an embodied self.* But that is no reason why we should fail to recognise its own true nature as spiritual reality par excellence. Rather it is a reason why we should be discriminating, and why we should dissociate the self from the body and from objects of all kinds, both mental and non-mental. Here then is a clear indication of a new form of reality called the spiritual reality. It is self-revealing to any possible knowledge. It alone can fulfil the ideal of true knowledge as enunciated by us. Neither the senses nor thought can mediate the knowledge of spiritual reality. That knowledge must be direct, immediate and indubitable, or it is no knowledge of the self at all.

We have indicated, in the intuition of our own self, the basis of a new kind of knowledge, where reality is not dead and unintelligent and so requiring to be informed by thought. Reality is intelligent and fully alive, and it informs thought itself. This basis of knowledge can be developed and perfected, till we get to Absolute Truth. That knowledge will not be open to cancellation. It will not be open to cancellation, because reality is intelligent, spiritual and self-effulgent. It reveals itself to our intellect, and thus determines our knowledge instead of being determined by it. *Self-effulgence* is as much a part of the nature of reality as *being* and *non-temporality.*

PART I

THE ABSOLUTE

(Advaitic Theology)

CHAPTER VI

ULTIMATE REALITY OR BRAHMAN —THE GROUND

Reality we may be said to know somehow. But what is ultimate reality? Is the conception at all necessary? We can answer this question quite simply. Anything that is real *in-itself* is real in an ultimate sense. This ultimate reality is to be distinguished from other forms of reality. If there are things which are necessarily related and have a nature only in relation to other things, they cannot constitute ultimate reality. They have a lower kind of reality. Similarly, if there are things which do not exist of themselves, but are *caused to exist* through the activity of something else, they too are not ultimate reality. The 'world' as we know it is the name of that whole collection of things in space or in time that are not self-existent and that come under the domination of the law of causality. This is the relativity of all things.

Kant's *phenomenal reality* is reality *to* an active subject functioning with the categories. Bradley's *appearances* come under the domination of certain categories of thought. All these forms of reality can only constitute a lower kind of reality which is not ultimate.

There are philosophers who are motivated by empirical considerations, and who therefore think that whatever may be said of the things that we know, they constitute all that is real to us. We simply cannot go beyond them. We may call them phenomena or appearances, etc. But they are the limit of our knowledge. We know nothing that is supersensible or transcendent or unrelated, etc. Everything is related to everything else in various ways. We have merely to recognise that. The world may in this sense be said to be a whole beyond which it is not possible to go. All explanation is *within* the limitations of a world of connected things. There is no possible explanation of the world as a whole and

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through the agency of a metaphysical reality. The seen and the visible is all that there is. Our human intelligence should not seek to penetrate that or go beyond that. These philosophers naturally have no metaphysical problem. Science constitutes for them the whole human endeavour at knowledge of reality.

There are other philosophers who are not satisfied with science only. They seek to go beyond the world and explain the world as a whole. They raise a question which they think is quite legitimate. If something is caused to exist, the search for the cause cannot stop till we get to a cause which is itself uncaused. If something has no reality *in itself*, then it can only derive its reality from something else which does have this reality. If something is necessarily related, then it must be grounded in that which is itself unrelated. Causality, relatedness, etc., lead beyond the world to something that is no part of the world and that is essentially metaphysical in character. Metaphysics simply cannot *be* avoided.

Let us suppose, for an instance, that relatedness is universal. In that case, we are involved in certain fallacies. If *A* is necessarily related to *B*, and *B* necessarily related to *A*, and so on for all the things contained in the world, we have the fallacy of mutual dependence. *A* cannot exist without *B*, and *B* without *A*. But then can either *A* or *B* exist? Again, if *A* is necessarily related to *B, B* to *C*, and so on till we reach the term *X*, which in its turn is related to *A*, we have the fallacy of circularity. Lastly, if *A* is related to *B, B* to *C, C* to *D*, and so on ad infinitum, it is the fallacy of the vicious infinite (*unavasthā*). Nothing really can exist. Something somewhere must be *unrelated in itself*, so that all relations can hang on it or appear in it. Unrelatedness is, in this sense, the truth of relations.

The need of an unrelated and metaphysical reality is quite evident to reason. But reason by itself can only negatively point to it. It cannot positively know the own nature (*svarūpa*) of that reality. As a general rule, reason

is not a method of direct knowledge of reality. It knows reality mediately only, i.e. with the aid of certain ideas. If we have a direct contact with physical reality or nature, it is not through reason, but through sensible intuitions. Reason comes later to formalise or idealise our knowledge. So far as metaphysical reality is concerned, any sense-intuition is out of question. How is reason to establish any contact with such reality? How can it know it in a positive way? Unless there is a positive method of knowledge which can reveal metaphysical reality for what it is, such reality will only remain a negative or an abstract idea of reason.

It is here that we have to call to aid a non-sensible and a non-rational source of knowledge. This is the revealed word or *śrûti*. *The word* is authoritative only where all other methods of knowledge fail. But for that very reason it is open to man to accept its authority or not. Sense-intuitions in a sense compel acceptance. *The word* never compels acceptance. But if the acceptance is free, the whole metaphysical venture is also free. We cannot hope to get *knowledge* of metaphysical reality, if we are lacking in faith *in the word.* It is our only way out of sense-dominated reason and imagination. It is our only way of *seeing* the Truth.

There are different kinds of statements of the scripture or *śrûti* which give us a knowledge of the ultimate metaphysical reality. Some statements give us an abstract and indirect knowledge of it. Others give us a more direct and intimate knowledge. Yet others pin-point the thing and reveal it to us in all its nakedness, completeness and simplicity. At each level, some ignorance is removed and some remains. At the final stage, as the result of the great statements or *mahāvākyas,* all ignorance is removed once and for all. All these different kinds of statements however, both principal and subsidiary, constitute one integral whole of the intellectual discipline which is necessary for the redeeming knowledge.

The first stage of knowledge of metaphysical reality is to know that reality as the ultimate cause of the world or

the metaphysical ground of the world. All things are caused to exist. Explanation of one occurrence by another occurrence is no explanation at all. The only kind of reality that can explain is the reality that is cause alone and never an effect. It must be an uncaused cause. It must be itself out of time. This is then the first characterisation of ultimate metaphysical reality called Brahman. It is that from which all things are born, in which they stay, and into which they disappear finally (yato-vā-imāni-bhūtāni jāyante, ...). Brahman is the cause of the birth, sustenance and end of the world.

Now the question arises, is this metaphysical causality of Brahman at all intelligible? Can the world as a whole be said to be created or brought into being? It is evident that we cannot understand how anything is born in an absolute sense, or how being can come out of non-being. A birth in this sense is always a miracle. But a miracle can be rendered intelligible. It becomes intelligible when absolute birth is replaced by a formal or apparent birth. We know this when a substance changes form. The substance remains the same, while the form alone changes. We have crude examples of this when gold changes into ornaments or clay into pots. The ornaments made of gold can literally be said to be born out of gold, to stay in gold and to return back to gold finally. This is also the analogy for metaphysical creation. There is no absolute creation or creation out of nothing. All creation is *within being*, not creation *of being*. This being then, which we shall call the being that is Brahman, is the substantival cause of the world. The world comes out of Brahman, stays in It and goes back to It. The world accordingly has no reality *apart from* the underlying ground which is permanent and eternal.

Brahman is *the Great*. *The Great* is that beyond which nothing can be greater. A measure of its greatness is provided by the world. The world which is limitless in time and limitless in space is still *contained* within Brahman. It is contained not as a real part,—for Brahman has no parts. It

is contained as a mere appearance is contained in the ground. A mere appearance may appear great in time and in space. But its greatness is as nothing in comparison to the greatness of the ground. The greatness of the latter is qualitatively different. What is great in time and space can have *a greater.* But what is great out of time and space cannot have a greater even in conception. It is the true infinite. All finite and all conceivable wholes are as nothing in comparison to the infinite. The great world is therefore only an infinitesimal part of the greatness of Brahman.

The causality of Brahman is only an *outside* character of Brahman. It is called its *taṭastha lakṣaṇa.* By knowing that Brahman is the cause, we know nothing about the *own nature* of Brahman. Besides, the cause is inferred only from the effect. We invariably go from the effect to the cause, not vice-versa. It is because we are confronted with a world that we go from the world to its metaphysical cause. To say therefore that Brahman is the cause of the world is to give merely an accidental or an outside description of Brahman. All we can say is that the being of Brahman is in a sense *necessary being,* because without it the world would not appear and would not be the world it is. The world demands an ultimate metaphysical cause, but it says nothing definitely about the nature of this cause. All it says is that the cause must transcend time, space and causality, which are the defining characters of empirical facts.

We have, for the present at least, conceived metaphysical causality on the analogy of clay and pots made of clay. This sort of cause is called *vivarta upādāna.* Brahman is the unchanging ground, while the world is a changing appearance only. The ground is the truth. It is uncreated and unborn. The world is created, and it also passes. The reality of the latter consists in name and form only, while the reality of the former is substantival. It is the same kind of relation which we find between the real and the illusory. The former is the reality of the latter. We conclude that Brahman is the reality of the world.

CHAPTER VII

NATURE OF BRAHMAN—*SAT* (1)

We have already said that Brahman is the cause or the metaphysical ground of the world. But that tells us nothing about the own nature or *svarûpa* of Brahman. All we know is that the metaphysical ground of this world is infinitely greater than the world. It is the Great. The Great can be nothing finite or related, which will naturally form part of the world. It can only be the unqualified, the unrelated and the infinite. Is there any such thing within our experience? The only thing we can find is what we call by the name of 'being' or *sat*. Whether there is any such thing called 'being' underlying all things may be doubted. But what cannot be doubted is that the underlying reality must have this most pervasive characteristic of all things, without having any of their distinguishing characters. This means that it must be what we can only call for the present 'pure being', without having any spatial, temporal or substantival distinction in it —*Kāla-desh-vastù-parichhed.*

This *being* we can be said to know. It is common to all things. We say, A is, B is, C is, etc. From the minutest particle of matter to the most exalted form of being, all have *sattā* or *being* in the same sense. This *being* is all-pervasive. Nothing can break its continuity. Only non-being can break its continuity, and non-being is not a thing. Being is thus the universal locus. Positive entities as well as the absence of positive entities both appear in it. It is really the Great. Nothing can be greater. Brahman is fundamentally indicated by *sat.*

The relation between *being* and *things* needs to be understood. Things are nothing without *being,* their pervasive ground. Take away *being,* and things are reduced to nothing. The same cannot be said of *being.* Things contribute nothing to *being.* The dependence is therefore essentially

one-sided. It is things that are adjectival to *being,* not vice-versa. Adjectival existence is not real existence. It is dependent and illusory. Thus *being* is the reality of all things. And so the Upaniṣads declare, "Verily, all this is Brahman (*sarvam-idam-Brahmaeva*)". This does not mean that things are Brahman, or nature is Brahman, or there is an equivalence between Brahman and the world. It means that Brahman alone is, not the things. Or in other words, things are negated in Brahman. This explains another upaniṣadic statement, which is very definite and clear: "*nčha nānā-asti-kincana* (there is no plurality here, i.e. in Brahman)".

This conception of one underlying substance is to be distinguished from Spinoza's conception of the same. Spinoza's substance has an infinity of attributes, although we know only two,—thought and extension. The attributes in their turn have appropriate modes in extended things and finite minds. The world of minds and things may thus be said to be a valid expression of the one underlying substance. Some interpreters of Spinoza have accordingly equated God with nature. In any case, the relation between Substance and Attributes has been left somewhat undefined and confused. What the intellect perceives of Substance may be true of It or it may not be true. In the former case, the known cosmos becomes literally a part of Substance—so that when we know the cosmos we literally know God. In the latter case, the own nature or *svarūpa* of Substance becomes an insoluble problem for knowledge.

Advaita Vedanta is emphatic that the underlying substance that is Brahman has no real attributes, such as Thought and Extension, and that therefore the world cannot be said to be literally contained in Brahman or to form a part of Brahman. Brahman and the world are wholly opposed to each other in nature, so that those who know Brahman do not know the world and vice-versa. All that we can say is that the world has no locus other than that of Brahman. The world appears in Brahman, which is its substance and

its ground. The relation between the ground and the grounded can be no other than that of the real and the illusory.

This also brings out another important difference. We *can know* Brahman. But in order to know Brahman, we must negate the world. Brahman is the very negation of the world. It is *not this, not that* (*nêti, nêti*). This negative approach is very important. But it is not the whole thing. In order to know Brahman in Its own true nature, there is also a positive approach. We must know Its intrinsic nature or *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa.* One way of knowing this intrinsic nature is to know Brahman as *being. Being* is nothing mysterious. It is known to us whenever we know anything at all. It is the common ground of all things—only it is known as loaded with particularities and differences of all kinds which constitute our world. This is however only one approach to the knowledge of Brahman in our present experience. Brahman is *being* (*sat*).

The Advaitic notion of *being* is also to be distinguished from Hegel's notion of it. For Hegel, the notion of *being* was the emptiest notion of reason. Accordingly, there was a demand to develop it in order to make it adequate to the wholeness and the concreteness of reality. The final form of this development was the Absolute Idea, which was the most inclusive and therefore the most stable category of Reason. For Advaita Vedanta, *being* is to be understood not as a notion of reason, but as reality itself. Ideas are all in the mind. Reality is not in the mind. Reality is in-itself. To the question, what is reality in itself?, our first answer is that it is *being.* Everything else that we know of things,—their qualities, their class-characters, their relations,—is ideal in character. *Being* is the very limit of all these ideal characters, which constitute our knowledge of things. *Being* is the only thing that is real and non-ideal. It is the thing-in-itself. It is no exaggeration to say that all things are made out of *being,* live in *being,* and go back to *being. Being* is their very stuff and substance. It is the only ultimate reality there is.

Advaita Vedanta thus reverses the whole Hegelian position. What was for Hegel the emptiest of ideas is for Advaita Vedanta the most real reality. It is the real of all reals (*satyasya satyam*). We erroneously take the super-imposed ideal content to be the reality, and the underlying *being* as an idea of ours only. It is just the opposite. We are committing the fallacy of what has been called in another context the fallacy of "misplaced concreteness".

The word "being" has a meaning for us. It is used significantly. But we are not always clear about its significance. It is evident that we do not use it to signify any objective entity or objective situation. It is in this respect in a class by itself. When we use an empirical concept like "dog", we know what sort of entity it refers to. We know a dog objectively. When we use the concept "cause", we know that it refers to an objective situation which can be distinguished from other objective situations not involving the concept. But the concept "being" has no such reference to an objective situation. It refers to all objects and objective situations alike, and it refers also to that unique Subject which is never an object—if we recognise any intuition which is appropriate to the latter. It is certainly not an exclusive concept. If it is at all exclusive, it excludes all the different *kinds of content* which are said to have being. If A has being, B has being, C has being, etc., then A, B, C, etc., are just accidents of *being*. If any of these entities is destroyed, *being* is not destroyed or affected. But without *being* as the common ground, none of these entities will ever *appear to have being*. While therefore we cannot point to something and say, "this is *being*", we cannot be said to have no meaning for *being*. We have the negative meaning,—this, that or the other thing is *not being* or is the negation of being. We fully well understand *being* in this negative sense.

This negative meaning of *being* is more easily understood in a different context of experience. We know things which are purely imaginary, e.g. hare's horn. We also know things which are self-contradictory, e.g. the son of a barren woman.

These two kinds of entities have no claim to reality whatsoever. They are called *tûchha*. They pose no kind of problem to thought. There are again certain entities which appear to be real, but which are cancelled by later knowledge. They are said to be illusory. The illusory have a borrowed kind of being, not real being. Real being then is different from what is unreal and what is illusory. The *sat*-character of Brahman can therefore best be understood in this negative sense.

We have said that Brahman, in Its own true nature, is indicated by the attribute of *being* or *sat*. But it is important to note that Brahman and the attribute must not be understood to stand in any external relation. *Being* does not *belong to* Brahman. If it did, Brahman would be one of the many entities of the objective world, and *being* would not constitute its own essential nature. There is literally a relation of *identity* between them. They are only two different ways of speaking about the same thing; or more appropriately, the two words discharge two different functions with respect to one and the same thing. The word 'Brahman' directs our attention to the ground of the world and something that is Great and Infinite, while the word *being* or *sat* directs our attention to what is eternally real and can never be cancelled in any subsequent knowledge like all things illusory. The words are different in meaning, but they coincide in significance. Brahman and Its *sat*-attribute stand in the relation of literal identity.

CHAPTER VIII

NATURE OF BRAHMAN—*CIT* (2)

Brahman may be unqualified and pure being. But any kind of real being must have both inwardness and depth. This brings us to the second attribute which is intrinsic to the nature of Brahman, namely *intelligence* (*cit*). There can be nothing deeper or more inward in *being* than intelligence. Intelligence never lies at the surface, it lies only at the core of being. It is no exaggeration to say that it is the self or the soul of all things that exist or appear to exist. It is *being* at its greatest intimacy and immediacy.

We said that inelligence lies at the core of all *being*. This appears to distinguish the core from its outer covers. There appears to be a distinction between intelligent being and non-intelligent being. That is not far from the truth so far as our experience is concerned. We might as well admit it. But a pertinent question arises here, how are the two varieties of *being* related to each other? Are they independent of each other?

One thing appears quite certain. No kind of *being* can have any meaning for us, unless it is either related to intelligence in knowledge or it is itself this intelligence. A thing that is not related to intelligence has no nature whatsoever. It is vacuous. We shall go farther. It is from the knowledge of anything that we proceed to the *independence* of that thing, not vice-versa. The independence in question is therefore a fruit or a product of knowledge. If knowledge, then independence. If knowledge is erroneous, then independence too is erroneous or mistaken. If we reverse the logical sequence and take the independence of a thing to be the original fact, we can neither say *what* is that thing which is independent nor what is it independent of. According to Advaita Vedanta, a thing that neither knows itself nor is known by another is no thing at all.

All things that achieve their nature only in relation to intelligence cannot be things-in-themselves. They cannot be real. The relation of knowledge is fundamental to them. But is there anything which lies beyond them or which is not so related? The only thing of the kind that we have so far hinted at is the *being* that is Brahman. Brahman cannot be related to anything beyond It, such as intelligence, for the very simple reason that there is nothing beyond *being.* If there were anything of the sort, it would only fall within a larger *being,* never beyond being as such. Brahman comprehends, as we have seen, *all being.* Nothing therefore can fall outside Brahman to which Brahman can be related. How can It then be related to intelligence? The only alternative left is that It is of the nature of Intelligence itself. Being that is Brahman is Intelligent Being.

What sort of Intelligence is this? We know intelligence as it functions in finite human beings. It functions through thoughts, feelings, volitions, etc. But all these mental functions have a determinate mental form which we can objectively know. They are not intelligent in their own right. In their own right, they are only certain forms of the mind or *vṛttis.* They have a borrowed intelligence only. There is some other intelligence beyond them which is formless and pure. This pure intelligence is the only real intelligence. Thought is intelligent, the ego is intelligent, the mind in general is intelligent, not of themselves, but because of their relation, the relation of false identity, to the pure intelligence, which is the only true knower. This knower knows, but is never itself known. There can be no knower of the knower. The upaniṣads therefore rightly declare: "*vijñātāram-are-kena-vijānīyāt* (by whom can the knower be known?)".

It may now be said that there is no real intelligence apart from the intelligent act; and since the mind is a series of such acts, the mind alone is intelligent. There is no intelligence beyond the mind. The so-called pure intelligence is not a reality, but only an abstraction. It is the name of intelligence in general, which is common to all intelligent

acts. It is thus an idea only. No-one ever knows intelligence in general, but only particular acts of intelligence. To be intelligent is to be an act of the mind. Take away every such act, and any purposeful or significant use of the term "intelligent" lapses. Thus pure intelligence is a myth, while the intelligent act is a reality.

Now it is no doubt true that pure intelligence is not itself known, however hard we may try to peep within ourselves. But then need all our meanings be objective? We cannot help recognising something that is by its very nature non-objective. A sensible object is known. But the knower of it is not known. We might suppose that the act of knowledge qualifies the knower, and the knower is thus known. But we naturally ask, known by whom? Is it known by another qualified knower? This knower however is not simultaneous with the one it is supposed to know. The later in time cannot know the earlier. And then, one object cannot know another object. The distinction between the knower and the known is absolute. The knower can never be the known. The real knower is therefore beyond all acts. It is an actless awareness or pure intelligence. That is the true subject. It is never an object. We have here something to which all objects are given, but which is never itself given as object; and yet we have a meaning for it in our own experience. Our meanings are not confined to mere objects.

It may now be argued that our analysis of experience is not justified. We have unnecessarily created an absolute division of nature between the object and the subject. There is no such division. We can argue on the following lines: "When I know an object of nature, say a tree, the tree is an object, while I am the knower of the object. But this knower of the object can itself be known, when I reflect. I do speak of the cognitive act and of my self as qualified by the act. Both the self and the act are thus objectified by me. Every knower can in this way be known. This means that the distinction of subject and object is functional only, not substantival. The subject at one moment can become object at another".

This analysis is true as far as it goes, but it is erroneous in the end. When I reflect upon my knowledge of the tree, the knowledge is already over. What I apprehend therefore is not the real knower, but a certain function of the mind which is already accomplished and so finished. The knower *as such* is never known. Qualifications are super-imposed upon it when we reflect, and then it becomes the knower of x or the knower of y, etc. We determine the knower from the outside. We forget that the real knower has escaped us, leaving in our hands some dead mental function as all that we can know. We have not known the truth.

It may now be argued that our reflective awareness is not far wrong. After all knowledge is a dynamic function of the mind. There is one act of the mind which is appropriate to knowing A, another act of the mind which is appropriate to knowing B, and so on. The real knower, whatever he may be, must be qualified by an appropriate act of the mind, and cannot be simply pure awareness. Pure awareness cannot distinguish a tree from a table. Being all pure, it cannot know one thing from another. It is only some kind of active or modified awareness that can know things and distinguish them. The real subject therefore is not a pure intelligence, but an active intelligence; and the latter can be known by the qualifying act of knowledge.

Let us grant all this. But how is the active subject known at all? Does it not imply a pure intelligence beyond it that reveals it? Possibly we shall say that we know it when we reflect upon knowledge. But reflection itself is not a mode of knowledge. Memory alone can be this mode, where what we are supposed to be knowing is something that is already past. But again, memory is not an *original* mode of knowledge. It presupposes a first-hand intuition. How do we explain the possibility of this? Not through a second act of knowledge which is simultaneous with the first! There can be no simultaneity between the different acts of the mind. These constitute a successive series. The later, evidently, cannot directly know the earlier. The only thing

that can directly know a cognitive act of the mind is a higher-level awareness, which is simultaneous with it and which we have called pure awareness. We are thus forced to accept the reality of this awareness.

We are quite ready to admit that pure awareness cannot know an object as object. It does not *act* and does not therefore *objectify*. It knows only in the sense of having a certain relation with the object it is said to know; and that relation is the relation of false identity (*ādhyāsic tādātmya*). Taking on this relation with the different cognitive acts, which are part of the mind, it becomes the apparent knower or the active subject called *pramātā*. Pure intelligence knows the world only in this sense,—it is the real or the ultimate knower. It also knows the intermediate mental acts,—but it knows them without the aid of other mental acts or *vṛttis*. Its relation of false identity with these acts suffices for the purpose.

To sum up, when I know *x*, *x* is the object and *I* am the knower. When I know this knower (*pramātā*), the knower is the object while that which knows it is pure awareness. This pure awareness or pure intelligence is the ultimate term in all knowledge. It is *before* all cognition that arises, as well as *after* it. It itself does not arise. It reveals not only the arisen act, but also its prior non-existence and its posterior non-existence. It knows without being known in its turn.

The notion of a pure and immutable intelligence may appear highly controversial. Attempts are therefore naturally made to avoid it altogether, and to substitute for it a series of emergent subjects. It is evident that an act of cognition cannot know itself as object at the time it arises. That will give rise to the fallacy of confusing the object-function with the subject-function, which both cannot reside in one and the same entity at the same time (*kartṛ-karma-virodha*). Again, an act of cognition cannot be known by a later or succeeding act; for they are not compresent. What is suggested therefore is that each act throws up its own subject and survives

in this subject. The subject may thus be called a superject. The successor-act holds its progenitor within it.

This kind of explanation of the subject will make nonsense of the whole pattern of knowledge. According to this pattern, the object is *given;* the subject is relatively enduring, so far as the act of cognition is concerned; and the relation between the object and the subject is that of compresence. The notion of survival cannot take the place of actual knowledge. It smacks either of physical chemistry or of theology. Both these are repugnant to the processes of knowledge.

We come back to pure intelligence as the real knower. A question arises here. Brahman may be of the nature of pure intelligence. But all being is not intelligent being. There is intelligent being as well as non-intelligent being. Everything that can be objectified, whether physical or mental, is, by our definition, non-intelligent. Intelligent being, on the other hand, includes only one thing,—and that is the ultimate subject in knowledge called pure intelligence. Does this not mean that there are ultimately two different varieties of being, intelligent and non-intelligent, irreducible one to the other ?

We now contend that these two kinds of being are not independent of each other. Unintelligent being divorced of all relation to intelligent being is nothing at all. We can give no meaning to it. Its relation to intelligent being is fundamental to it. It is object *to* a subject. It is *objective being* only. Apart from this objectivity, it has no being called self-being. Intelligent being too is, in a sense, related to the unintelligent. It is the *subject* of knowledge, and the subject is naturally understood in relation to the object. But intelligent being is not wholly exhausted by its subjective function in knowledge. The subjective function has a necessary relation to the object; and because of this relation, the subject can be understood as another kind of object, perhaps a higher grade object. The *true* subject is not, and cannot be, thus related. Intelligent being is no doubt the subject

in any piece of knowledge; but it is also more than the subject. It is that pure intelligence which reveals the subject and also the subject-object co-relationship. Intelligent being is thus beyond all those relations which subsist between objects of some kind. It is really unrelated. It is the ground. The only relation it ever has is the relation of false identity, which is not a real relation. The conclusion is inevitable that there is a superficial subject and a real subject. The latter is of the nature of pure intelligence. It is the ground of all appearances, both objective and subjective. It is the ultimate metaphysical reality. There is no other.

In this connection, we should like to correct an error. There are philosophers who have accepted the reality of pure awareness in a more or less objective sense. They have argued that pure awareness is a diaphanous stuff. The moment therefore we try to look at it, we only succeed in looking *through* it; and so we naturally miss it. But, so the argument goes, we *can* know it. If we attend to it intelligently, we can isolate it and know it for what it is. This is, in our opinion, not at all a happy analysis of our experience. However hard we may try, we can never isolate pure awareness or have a look at it in the best of circumstances. Pure awareness is no object of any kind. It is different from all objects. Its reality is in a class by itself. To know it, we must have a different kind of approach. It must not be an objective approach. Objectively, it will just not be there. Hume's analysis of the self is quite revealing on this point. He could not find a permanent self. Can anyone find pure awareness? Any such attempt is doomed to failure. The more we go within ourselves, the farther does the self retire from our view. If we could fix it, it would cease to be the self it really is. The self as it really is refuses to oblige a secular gaze.

We must reverse the whole objective way of looking at the self or pure intelligence. The two are identical. In fact, we must stop looking altogether; and if we cannot wholly desist from that, we must look behind every front, every

appearance and every surface,—till we come to the *immediate self,* which is ever-present and never past. That may appear vague, uncertain and even mysterious language. But where direct meanings are unavailable, we can only resort to metaphorical or suggestive language, which points the way but cannot pointedly indicate. There are limitations of language. But language used symbolically has an almost infinite extension of meaning.

Our thought may not be equal to the task, or it may refuse to be convinced. In that case, the negative way is still open to us. We can silence thought. We can give it what it can follow. Pure intelligence is not *an entity,* which we can literally mean or directly know. Let us say, it is the negation of every thing that is unintelligent or *jaḍa.* We know things which are unintelligent. We also know things which are a mixture of what is intelligent and what is unintelligent. This is pre-eminently the case with our own mental activity. We can distinguish forms of thought from the subject which thinks them. Here negation is possible and can be carried to its farthest limit. This limit is reached when *everything objective* and *everything that can confront us* is negated and what is left is the formless awareness that sustains all forms. Some knowledge of the intelligent reality is thus possible through a thorough-going negation. But if thought is not prepared to undertake such a process of negation, it ought to rest satisfied with a negative characterisation of intelligent being as what is different from unintelligent being in all its conceivable forms.

Like *being, intelligence* too is not an external character of Brahman. We cannot distinguish Brahman from *intelligence.* To distinguish them, we shall require another intelligence which is the ground of the distinction, and which is therefore more fundamental and real than the first intelligence. *The truth is that intelligence as such can never be distinguished.* It is the ground of all distinctions, never a term of distinction. If intelligence itself were distinct, nothing would be left to know it as distinct. It is the most

pervasive reality even as *being* is. As a matter of fact, *being* and *intelligence* have the relation of identity. It is one and the same thing called by different names. The names have different functions to perform. They direct our attention in different ways, and thus enable us to reject certain characters from the nature of reality. "Brahman" rejects what is finite, "being" rejects what is illusory, and "intelligence" rejects what is unintelligent or *jaḍa.* In this way, they dispel different kinds of doubt and different forms of misconception about the nature of ultimate reality. In the end, they meet in the same reality and are indistinguishable from it and from one another. Brahman is described as *nirvikāra-citi-reva-kevalā* (i.e. pure formless intelligence).

A doubt is sometimes raised that our real self and intelligence cannot be one and the same thing. Intelligence is only a *function* of the self. It is not the *substance* of the self. Let it be so. But then what is the nature of the self itself? Is it something unintelligent? In that case, it must be object of some kind; and we can legitimately ask, *object to whom?* In the end there must be a subject which is never an object. Besides, if the self itself is unintelligent, how can it have the function of intelligence? Only an intelligent being can have the function in question. In that case, what is more primary,—the function or intelligent being that has the function? Any distinction between intelligence and the being of the self is quite fruitless. The self *is* intelligent.

CHAPTER IX

BRAHMAN AS *ĀNANDA* (BLISS)—3

We have said that ultimate reality or Brahman is of the nature of the intelligent being. It is spiritual in character. With this, a new category, the category of value, comes into operation. Value is inseparable from intelligent being.

There is a natural transition from *being* to *intelligence.* Being is either *intelligent in itself* or it is *necessarily related to intelligence.* But is there any such transition from *being* to *value*? That does not appear to be the case. There appears no necessity, in the nature of *being,* that it should be valuable. Being does not imply value. Being as such is neutral as to value. It is different however with *intelligent being.*

Intelligent being cannot but be pleasurable being or painful being. It may be supposed to be neutral as between pleasure and pain. But however neutral it may be, it cannot lapse into the neutrality of dead, lifeless and unfeeling matter. There are degrees of pain, and there are degrees of pleasure. Also there are superior forms of both and inferior forms. But intelligent being is always in a state, which can only be described as pleasurable or as painful, happy or unhappy, etc. Even when it is apparently neutral as to pleasure and pain, the neutrality can be recognised as the sort that we want to have continued or the sort that we want to have terminated. That makes a difference to the value-character of the neutrality in question. In the former case, it is a higher or a subtler kind of joy (*svāsthya*); in the latter case, it is a species of boredom.

The state of joy of being is an intrinsically valuable state. It is desired for its own. Other things are variously desired, because they are conducive to the joy of being. This joy, however, is not a means to some other end. It is the only thing that is unconditionally valuable.

There are philosophers who think that acts of morality and things that are beautiful have intrinsic value, which is not the monopoly of a state of pleasure or of joy. We do not agree with this view. It is based upon the wrong supposition that value can belong to acts or things as such. If it did so belong, we could apprehend it as part of things or acts in a purely dispassionate cognitive attitude. But value is never so apprehended. Things require to be evaluated, which means that they must be felt as satisfying. Take away the feeling, and value collapses. This is particularly so about beauty. What is fundamental to beauty as a value is aesthetic satisfaction. This satisfaction however is good and valuable, because it is satisfaction. It is not a means to some other end.

But are not moral acts good in themselves and recognised as such? Feeling or emotion does not appear to play any part here. We dispassionately judge an act to be right or wrong. Our emotion may come in later, and we can then say that we approve or disapprove of the act. But the approval or the disapproval is consequent upon the moral judgment. It does not constitute the act moral or immoral.

This purely cognitive account of moral values does not appear to us to be at all valid. Cognitively, we can only know an act in its existential aspect. The moral goodness of the act is a matter of evaluation. Evaluation is relating a thing to our fundamental needs, desires and aspirations. We want satisfactions of various kinds, some more satisfying than others. Moral acts too satisfy. Only their satisfaction is more refined than many other forms of satisfaction. Behind the icy appearance of the call of duty is the satisfaction that it conduces to greater freedom from fear, to inner peace and to a higher destiny of the soul. There are all kinds of needs for a fuller, more harmonious and more universal life.

It may be argued here that we must *first* know an act to be a duty, and *then* alone can we relate it to our future or spiritual well-being. Now the acts that are said to be moral are not directly intuited to be such. They are enjoined either

by the scripture or the sacred tradition or social custom. To know that they are so enjoined is indeed knowledge pure and simple. But the *acceptance* of what is so enjoined as a duty which ought to be done is not a cognitive matter. It is a matter of the will. "Why should I do what is enjoined?" is a question which can only be answered by relating the supposed duty to my own ulterior well-being or happiness. That alone gives it value. All my acts are inspired by the ideal of happiness or of self-fulfilment.

In seeking to know the nature of Brahman, we are seeking to know it in terms of certain questions natural to thought. We know things that are changing, moving, and even illusory. We naturally ask, is Brahman like that? We answer, no. Brahman exists in all the three times. It ever was, is, and shall be. Again, we know material things that cannot know other things or even themselves. Is Brahman like that? No. Brahman is that intelligent being that knows itself and knows all other things besides. Lastly, we know several grades of finite value in which satisfaction of a sort is mixed with dissatisfaction. Is Brahman like that? No. It is infinite joy (*ānanda*). The Upaniṣads declare: "That which is Great is full of joy; the small is painful (*yo-wai-bhūmā-tat-sukham, nālpe sukham-asti*).

We naturally confront the intelligent being that is Brahman with the demand for value. Intelligent being must be either in a state of satisfactoriness and joy or its opposite. It cannot stay neutral like matter. We are thus made to recognise the third important attribute of Brahman. The infinitely great is also, by its very nature, the infinitely joyful. Finitude is the cause of all pain. The freedom of the finite is naturally restricted. This restriction of freedom of an intelligent being cannot but be felt as painful. All empirical existence or embodied existence is finite, and therefore painful. Our goal is clear. We ought to shake off our finitude. Birth is a bondage, growing old is a bondage, death too is a bondage. Life as such is a bondage. On the other hand, that which is never born and never dies is free from all bondage. It is the immortal. It represents the

highest joy of being. Brahman is this by its very nature. Unlike the individual, it is free from birth and death (*asaṁsāri*) and eternally free from every kind of bondage (*nitya-mukta*). It is immortality itself (*amṛtam*). The individual can attain to this state of immortality when he knows Brahman.

This bliss of Brahman cannot be conceived by us. It is so unlike all our joys! All our joys have a negative side. They relate to some object of desire. Desire means some felt deficiency; and every deficiency is painful. Desire thus makes for disharmony and restlessness. Our whole life is full of active and incipient desires, and it is therefore full of the pain of existence. When a desire is temporarily fulfilled, a state of painfulness is removed. This removal of pain is felt by us as an inner expansion and joy. There is nothing positive about it. The removal of pain does not *add* a value to our being. It merely leads to the re-manifestation of that joy which is natural to our inner being and which was hidden by desire. Real joy is therefore different from a bubbling joy or a joy that creates a new kind of restlessness. It is characterised by equanimity, poise and peace. It is a state of desirelessness. There is no enjoyer in it, and nothing enjoyed. It is the joy that more nearly approximates to the joy of non-duality.

The joy of Brahman is qualitatively different from all other joys. It has no negative side. It is purely positive. There is no desire and no fulfilment of desire. It is the joy of *being*. Being itself is bliss. There are joys which are the products of inner pressures and outer fortune. The bliss of Brahman is different from them all. It is the *own nature* of Brahman. To know Brahman is therefore to know It as blissful. If we presumably know Brahman, but do not feel the bliss of Brahman, it is not genuine knowledge of Brahman at all. Knowledge and bliss are here inseparable.

It may here be said that our joys are positive too. They do not necessarily take the form of the removal of a need or the fulfilment of a desire. We do take satisfaction in things we do not for the time being need. While casually moving in a place, our sense of smell may be stimulated by a new frag-

rance, which we begin to enjoy immensely. Someone puts sugar-candy in our mouth, and we do like it. All this pleasure is positive, and presupposes no prior need and its removal. This is even more evident in the case of our aesthetic pleasures. A beautiful object pleases, because it has a positive value and is likable for its own sake. To appreciate beauty is to have a positive kind of joy.

We now contend that we cannot feel satisfaction unless we have created a need, physical or aesthetic. Sugar-candy thrown in the mouth of a glutted man or a man physically distempered will not please. If the cause of the pleasure were solely in the object, it should please in all circumstances. But it is only when our body has created a need for a thing that the thing pleases.

Aesthetic enjoyment is not an exception. We have aesthetic needs no less than physical needs. Our aesthetic training develops them to a higher potency and keener enjoyment. Your aesthetic training may be different from mine, and so may be our joys. If my aesthetic needs are fulfilled, I feel the joy, otherwise not. My trained eye and my trained ear are the products of my training. We are able in this way to attend to the pure aesthetic form which meets our individual requirements, and our reaction follows automatically, almost constitutionally. As we have a physical constitution which is pleased by certain things and not pleased by others, so we have an aesthetic constitution equally sensitive to certain things and not sensitive to others. We aesthetically react to objects only in conformity with our aesthetic needs and requirements. Aesthetic enjoyment is thus no exception to the rule that all our joys presuppose a natural or an acquired taste, that has taken the form of a constitutional longing or desire, sometimes explicit and sometimes only implicit.

It may here be said that all our desires and longings are not necessarily painful. We can take pleasure in some of them. A man in love longs to meet the beloved; and this longing, which evidently makes him restless and unhappy, is anything

but unpleasant to him. He finds a new life in it and a new joy,—the joy of separation. Sometimes a lover of this type almost falls in love with the longing itself and does not want to have it terminated through fulfilment. We call this sentimental love. It is love primarily for one's own feelings and for one's own good self rather than love for the other person who is the object of love. Some great saints are sometimes a bit sentimental too. They exalt their intense feeling of separation from the Beloved, and wish that their longing continued unabated and was never cancelled through union. There is also another kind of desire which is most valuable, and that is the desire for the saving knowledge or for Freedom. Desire as such need not therefore be always painful or unwelcome or unwholesome. It may stand for more life and greater joy.

All this has a modicum of truth. But what it proves is not that desire as such can be altogether free from pain or the source of positive joy. All it proves is that certain desires lead to the exaltation of personality by creating in the individual higher kinds of interests and wants. The exaltation and expansion is indeed joyful. But no want can in itself be joyful. A want requires to be fulfilled; and till it is fulfilled, it gives no rest and no peace. It creates a sort of vacuum in our spiritual constitution. All desire-based joy just fills this vacuum. It merely makes good a certain deficiency. The only positive joy is the wantless and desireless joy that is in the very nature of *being*. To be *is* to be joyful. *It is this joy that is being, that expresses itself positively in all other joys that are desire-based.* The latter belong to the sphere of the mind, the former to the deep-seated spirit. The joys of the mind come and go. They are impermanent. They do not fulfil. They leave behind a bitter taste, some new dissatisfaction, some new want. The joy of the spirit is as permanent as the spirit. It is always there,—only it is hidden or veiled by pain or by desire. When the pain or the desire is removed, the fundamental and ever-present joy of *being* manifests itself. It is never really lost. It only *appears* to be lost and regained. The joy of our being supports even the felt lack of joy and

positive pain. The region of 'no sorrow', 'no pain' and 'perpetual joy' supports all our sorrow, all our pain and all our desires for happiness. Only we fail to attend to this region. Our apparent sorrows are superficial like the waves. The truth behind them or underneath them is as deep as the ocean. The ocean is not affected by the storms that heave the surface.

A consequence of our thesis is that real value does not reside in the object that appears to give satisfaction. It lies deep down in our Self that is the very stuff of joy. The object merely removes a need. We are said to enjoy the object. But there is no joy *in the object*. The joy is only *in the Self* which expresses itself through the removal of the need. All joy, however obtained, is the joy of the Self. There is no other. We wrongly locate it in the object. The object only arouses our desire and is correlative to desire. There is no joy in this. The joy only comes when we forget the object and all that it implies. Or varying the metaphor, we might say that it is only when the object melts away in the experience of unity that the fullness of joy is manifested. This experience of unity has its own levels. As long as there is the slightest awareness of duality of the object loved and that which loves, the highest in joy has not been realised. The highest in joy is the joy of non-duality. From the point of view of this joy, all other forms of joy are bound to appear as being in some degree forms of pain. The joy of Brahman is infinite, pure, positive and without end.

We cannot possibly conceive the joy that is Brahman or the joy of non-duality. We only know finite human joys. These are mixed with pain. If we negate the pain, we negate all finite joys. The infinite joy lies deep down in our own being. We can know this joy only when we know our being to be the being of Brahman.This is the knowledge of unity of the individual (*jīva*) and the Absolute. In the absence of this knowledge, we can only understand the joy that is Brahman negatively. It is the negation of pain, and so the negation of all human joys which are infected with pain.

CHAPTER X

THE ATTRIBUTE OF INFINITUDE AND THE REST—4

(1) We have so far considered the three principal attributes of Brahman,—*being, intelligence* and *bliss* (*sat-cit-ānanda*). Other attributes follow from these. Brahman is infinite (*anantam*). This follows from the fact that *being* is the ground of all things known and knowable, and that there can be no limitation to it. No thing can fall outside *being*. Being is really the infinite.

All the positive attributes of Brahman, we have already seen, have to be interpreted negatively. The reason is that they cannot be known objectively, as something finite or limited. The attribute "infinite" is itself negative. It is the negation of finitude. There are different forms of finitude. A thing may be in one place, not in another. It may exist at one time, not at another. It may have certain distinguishing characters, not others. Brahman has none of these lmitations. It is free from spatial, temporal and substantival differences (*deśa-kāla-vastu-parichheda*).

We often conceive the infinite as what can be continued indefinitely. Space, time, quantity, content, etc., can be increased indefinitely. This is a spurious infinite. The infinitude of Brahman is not of this order. It has none of the above-mentioned characters which can be extended or increased. It is an accomplished or completed infinitude. Being has no parts or magnitude. It is only *things,* that are super-imposed upon *being,* that have parts or magnitude, and that are divisible in some dimension or other. Being is indivisible, intelligence is indivisible, and perfect joy (*niratiśaya-ānanda*) is indivisible. Each of them is itself the whole. It is not made out of parts and is not open to analysis. We can say about *being* that it has no magnitude, and yet it is inclusive of all particular existences and all particular magnitudes. Similarly, the pure

intelligence that is Brahman is inclusive of all levels and all orders of particular intelligences; and the bliss that is Brahman is inclusive of all finite joys of finite beings. We can thus truly say that Brahman is greater than the greatest,—because it is the inclusive ground. At the same time, it is smaller than the smallest,—because It has no dimension. (*Aṇoraṇīyān, mahato-mahīyān*). The truth is that the infinitude of Brahman is *qualitative,* not quantitative. Brahman is infinite by its very nature, not infinite by any outside measure.

(2) Brahman is said to be pure (*śuddha*). A thing is said to be pure when it is not a mixture of different kinds of things. Man, for instance, cannot be said to be pure. He is a composite entity. He is a mixture of body and soul, matter and spirit, etc. The body itself has its own forms of purity and impurity. In the same way, the mind too can be spoken of as having clean and unclean thoughts, mixed motives, etc. But for our present purpose, we can ignore these secondary forms of purity and impurity. The fundamental form of purity is the ontological purity of *one substance.* Matter and spirit are ontologically speaking different substances. If they are mixed up, as they are in the human being, we get an entity that is not pure. Man belongs to two different realms. As spirit, he needs to be released from the bondage of matter. But as matter, he has no need of redemption.

As opposed to man and all other creatures, Brahman is one substance, and that substance is pure intelligence. That is our goal too. Brahman is free from every impurity that comes from the body, and from every sin that comes from the association with the body and its cravings. Brahman is pure and sinless. The body and the associated mind function intelligently and thrive on the intelligent Self, but they cannot affect the latter with their impurities. The Self is essentially pure. But, in our ignorance, we identify it with the body and its cravings, the mind and its sinful desires, and we naturally feel as though the Self itself is tainted. But this taint is due to ignorance only. In itself the Self is one flavour,—pure endless joy.

(3) It follows from what we have said that the Self is also free (*mukta*). All bondage comes from the body and its various sheaths with which we, in our ignorance, identify ourselves. Embodied existence is in this sense existence in bondage. But since this bondage is due to ignorance only, it is not real bondage. It is imagined bondage only. As soon as ignorance is dispelled by knowledge, there will be no bondage any more. The Self is by nature free,—free from every limitation of the body and the wider world with which the body is related.

(4) Brahman is formless, partless, undifferentiated and simple. Objects, necessarily finite in character, have a dimension. They may be said to be put together. What is put together can also be said to fall apart. Composite entities then can be said to be born, and also destroyed. The simple is neither born nor destroyed. It will remain what it is through all vicissitudes.

Brahman is the only reality that is simple in this sense and so indestructible (*avināśī*). Even the ultimate constituents of matter, electrons, protons, etc. cannot be simple. They must at least have a spatio-temporal location. They are acted upon and also react. This is impossible without internal pressures, internal changes and a composite structure. The simple can neither act nor be acted upon. The simple is just the immutable.

Some theologians regard the *soul* as simple and so indestructible or immortal. But the concept of the soul, like the concept of the ultimate constituents of matter, is drawn from imagination. They are all hypothetical entities, and will always remain such. If we could know them, they would be like all other objects of knowledge, composite entities, not simple. Their supposed simplicity is essentially a creation of our imagination. The only thing that is really simple, and that can be said in a way to be known by us and not merely imagined, is what we call our true and immediate *self*. Since it is distinct fundamentally from all objects, it cannot be presented as object; and what cannot be presented as object can

have no dimension whatsoever in which it can be divisible. It is the only thing within our direct knowledge that is really simple and indivisible. It is also therefore the indestructible and the immortal. This is our only foothold within our experience for comprehending the reality that is Brahman.

(5) All the positive attributes of Brahman can be interpreted negatively. But there are other attributes which are essentially negative and need no further interpretation. Their great importance lies in the fact that they distinguish Brahman from everything that belongs to the world most clearly and definitely. We have already seen that Brahman is infinite and indivisible (*niravayava*). It is also unqualified (*nirdharmak*), unrelated (*asaṅg*), unchanging (*avikārī*), immutable (*avyabhichārī*), actless (*akriya*), not long, not short (*aṛhsva, adīrgha*), without hunger or thirst (*akṣutpipāsu*), formless (*nirguṇa, nirākāra*), etc.

Our common words which we use in ordinary life have direct meaning in objects of experience. Since Brahman is no such object, it cannot be literally meant by any word. It is therefore rightly represented by the *upaniṣads* that the words of our object-language cannot do justice to the reality of Brahman. The mind and the speech are said to turn back from Brahman, frustrated (*yato-vācho-nivartante aprāpya manasā-saha*). This however does not rule out the possibility of an intellectual intuition of Brahman which uses concepts symbolically. The whole enquiry after Brahman is based upon the acceptance of such a possibility.

All the attributes of Brahman, both positive and negative, point to one and the same thing, that is without any differences in it. It is spoken differently and described differently. The function of these descriptions is not to introduce differences where none obtain, but to point to the unique and indivisible character of the reality that is Brahman. The thing is one. We call it, for the convenience of our understanding, by different names.

CHAPTER XI

SUBSTANCE AND ATTRIBUTES

We are said to know a thing when we know what sort of thing it is or what are its attributes. We cannot know an attributeless thing. From this it is argued that every real thing must have some attributes. But this does not follow. A thing can be attributeless. Only there will be a question, how can we know such a thing? The difficulty of answering this question can be avoided by arguing that what we *really* know is *always* the attributeless thing. Attributes are only a means of knowing it. They are the gateways to the knowledge of the thing. The gateway is never a part of that to which it leads.

This view can be justified. We distinguish the thing and its attributes. Not only that. We give a metaphysical status to the thing different from that of the attributes. We say the attributes depend for their existence upon the thing. The thing does not depend for its existence upon the attributes. If the dependence were mutual, neither could possibly exist. If A depends upon B and B upon A, there is the fallacy of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśraya*). Both A and B would in that case need to depend upon a third something which is not itself dependent. Since the thing has thus a status different from that of the attributes, it is pertinent to ask, what is the thing in itself apart from the attributes? We cannot answer this question by saying that it has some other attributes. We can only answer it by saying that it is attributeless. An attributeless thing existing in itself is a necessity of the situation. That alone is a fit object of knowledge, if anything is. Attributes form no part of it. They merely point to it. They point to it, because they have a certain relation to it. It is the relation of *belonging*. We say the attributes belong to the thing.

What is this relation of belonging? It implies, firstly, that something is capable of owning without being itself owned. Only an absolute kind of reality, not belonging to something else, can really own. It is the *absolute owner*. Secondly, the relation of belonging is *accidental*. The thing may come to possess what belongs to it, or it may not. If it loses what it possesses, the loss should not affect it in its own true nature. It is like putting on a cap or throwing it away. The cap only adds a non-essential prestige. Thirdly, this relation is *not natural*. Naturally, each thing can only be what it is *in itself*. It can possess nothing. It can only possess *its own nature;* and we can make no distinction between the thing and its nature. This kind of possession is only a way of affirming literal identity. The nature of the thing does not come from outside the thing. It is the thing itself. What is commonly said to be possessed is what comes from outside the thing and what can be distinguished from the thing; and it is possessed in a self-willed or egoistic way. It is *falsely taken* to belong to one's self, and even taken in a sense to form part of one's self. In this way, I may own a house, my clothes, even my body, etc. There is no limit to what I can possess in this artificial way; and yet the whole possession is dependent upon my will. It may be that reality or ultimate reality has no will. In that case, possession can only be explained by the presence of will elsewhere. *This will makes the necessary attribution.* We say, x belongs to A. May be, A makes no claim to x. Reality, for instance, can make no claim to what is alien to its own nature. But then my will can establish the relation of possession between the two through sheer error.

It is contended by us that reality as such has no attributes. It is the method of our knowing or the method of our perceiving that ascribes certain attributes to an attributeless reality. We do not do this *consciously* or *purposely*. We do not do it by any *necessity*. We do it just as a matter of fact. The attributes are not *there* or just part of reality. They are mental fictions or ideas. Their source is subjec-

tive, not objective. But because we cannot know the thing without these mental fictions, we use them for the purpose of knowledge. We identify what are only ideas in our mind with the thing itself, and thereby give them a sort of pseudo-objectivity and reality. The thing begins to appear as though it has the attributes in reality, and the attributes begin to appear as though they really belong to the thing and form a necessary part of it. It is all an illusion, made possible by our judgmental method of knowledge.

The relation of belonging, it may be noted, has two different forms in our experience. The more common form is where two independent things are brought in this relation. The house belongs to me. My will has brought about the relation of possession. But if the will can bring about the relation, it can also dissolve the relation; and when the relation is dissolved, neither thing is affected. The house will remain in its place, and I in mine. The house is nothing to me and I am nothing to the house. This relation of indifference gradually changes with things which are more intimately owned. When, for instance, the body belongs to me, it is not easy to think that the body can remain in its place and I in mine. The body appears to be part of me or me. When I say the mind belongs to me, I cannot easily conceive how the mind can remain in its place as a thinking or feeling entity and I remain in my place without the mind. But even here our experience can be analysed to show that the distinction is real and ultimate. If the mind is *mine* and I am *conscious* of the mind and its workings, I must be able in some sense to stand apart from the mind. This may appear difficult and even incomprehensible to some. They can argue that it is only a way of saying that the mind is *mine*, while in point of fact I and the mind are one and the same thing, and there is no relation of possession between them. May be, our language is misleading. But may be also that the language portrays the exact nature of our experience. My thought, of which I am aware, is not literally myself. My thoughts, my feelings, my will, etc., all change,—the possessor of those thoughts, feelings, etc., does not change. There is

an intuition of identity between my present self and my past self, and it cannot be explained away. Such an analysis of our experience can be justified. There is no absurdity about it. It may be the literal truth. In that case, our language is not misleading us. My thoughts belong to me, but do not constitute my own inmost being, which can stand by itself. If that is so, it should be possible for me to stand apart from the mind as a being superior to the mind.

The possessor can always stand apart from the possessed. But that cannot be said of the possessed in all cases. The house which I own can stand apart from me and remain unaffected by the relation. But the same thing cannot be said of the body or the mind. We know, when the relation of the body to the self is terminated at death, the body disintegrates. Again, we cannot think how the mind can remain unaffected, when the self whose mind it is remains no longer united to it. The mind cannot function without the self that gives it unity and the character of intelligence. The intelligent self is always at the back of it. The integrality of the relation of the possessed to the possessor is still more evident in the case of the attributes and the thing. The thing can, and must, stand apart from the attributes. But the attributes certainly cannot stand apart from the thing. The green of the leaf cannot stand apart from the leaf; and when we do try to separate them, the leaf remains, while the green has become only an idea. And then, does the idea remain by itself? Evidently, an idea is not a thing which can exist by itself. It can only subsist in a thinking mind, which in its turn subsists in a self.

The most important case in which something cannot subsist except through the relation of belonging is that of the illusory. The illusory belongs to the real. We say, this is a snake; i.e., snakehood belongs to this thing which is really a rope. It is through this relation of belonging that the illusory puts up an appearance. Take away the relation, and the illusory collapses. It is nothing in itself. It is only a false creation, which is attributed to the underlying substance.

This analogy helps us to understand the relation of attributes and substance generally. Substance is always something *in itself*. It sustains the attributes which are said to belong to it. Attributes cannot exist by themselves or of themselves. They can only subsist *in* a substance. Attributes have in this sense only a dependent or an illusory sort of existence.

Substance as such, is necessarily attributeless; and because it is attributeless, there can be only one substance, not many substances. The many substances of our experience are only an appearance, made possible by different sets of attributes. Of the attributeless, there can be no varieties and no differences.

The question naturally arises, how can we know an attributeless reality? If now we realize that the attributes misrepresent reality or distort reality, the way to the knowledge of the attributeless becomes quite clear. The analogy of the illusory is easily available. It is only through the negation of the super-imposed illusory that we get to know the underlying reality. We can similarly get to know the attributeless through the negation of the attributes. It is the way of negation. We first misperceive, and then we correct our misperception. Or in other words, if there is no illusory attribution to begin with, there can be no knowledge of ultimate truth. From untruth we go to truth.

The attributes of Brahman are in this respect different from all empirical attributes which we give to reality. They do not mislead. When we perceive reality in the form of the world, we misperceive. But when we know Brahman as "being, intelligence, bliss, etc.," we know the own nature of Brahman. The attributes take us very near to Brahman. Only they have to be symbolically interpreted. They point to one and the same thing, although the pointers are different. If they are applied literally, they will introduce differences where there are none. Brahman is all its attributes, not because it harmonises them in some mysterious

way and reconciles its own unity with differences of attributes, but because it rejects all differences in a unity which is literally indivisible and attributeless. The best of our attributes, which guide us to the ultimate truth, are still in this sense infected with human error. All our speech-forms, however useful as a means, reveal themselves in the end to be inadequate and even somewhat erroneous. Speechlessness is the only right response when we face the whole and literal truth. This is however not easily obtained. It is the end and the goal. To reach the goal, man has to make various approaches. He knows the truth variously, because he has to mix truth with error. Such is the limitation of our human knowledge. We can however transcend the limitation.

CHAPTER XII

IDENTITY OF *JĪVA* AND BRAHMAN

All the attributes of Brahman represent Brahman as a neutral and third-person entity, represented by the pronoun 'it'. Such representation implies outsidedness and exclusiveness. What it cannot include is the 'I' or the Self.

The Self is the only entity we know directly and immediately. All other entities are more or less removed from the Self. This proposition may not be accepted by all. It might be argued that we know other persons too directly. When I address, I use the word 'I' for myself as the speaker, and I use the word 'you' for the person or persons spoken to. My knowledge of 'you' is quite as direct and unmediated as my knowledge of 'I'. There is no difference. The speaking 'I' has its natural complement in the 'you' spoken to. We know both 'I' and 'you' directly, and in a sense simultaneously. When I use the word 'I', there must be some-one who is addressed and who is properly called 'you'; and if I use the word 'you', there must be some speaking 'I' who is addressing.

There is some truth in this argument, but it is not the whole truth. Putting aside the use of words, let us look into our intuitions, which give meaning to words. Here we shall find that we know no other entity as directly and as fully as our own Self. The 'I' is known to myself in all its inwardness, immediacy and wholeness. I cannot claim the same direct intuition of another person whom I call 'you'. As a *person* he may be an enigma to me. As a *spiritual entity,* he is just a copy of my Self. I have only one direct intuition of what is called 'spirit', and that is the intuition of the First Person, 'I'. All other persons are just imitations or copies of this 'I'.

The person I call 'you' is after all presentable to me physically or as some kind of object. He must have a body.

I can only approach him from the outside. I do not do so with myself. I do not approach my Self through the body, but just the reverse. This is *my* body, just because it belongs to *me*. It is different with the person I call 'you'. If I call him a person or a self, I do that on the analogy of my own person or self that alone I know directly. If I were asked, what is it to be a person?, I shall not go for an instance to a 'you', but only to my own intuition of myself. I do not possess two original intuitions of selfhood,—one appropriate to 'I' and the other to 'you'. 'You' is only some kind of object that is analogically interpreted as a self. But if the second person 'you' is thus removed from the First Person and is only intelligible in terms of the latter, the third person or 'he' is still more removed from 'I'. The third person is only understood as a possible 'you'. The absent person can become present to me or a 'you'. But neither 'he' nor 'you' can ever become 'I' literally. They must shed their externality and their objectivity before they can take on the character of 'I'. 'You' and 'he' are at best 'I' objectified. But the 'I' that is objectified is as good as no 'I'. It has the character of the not-Self. It involves a self-contradiction.

The 'I' stands for the pure subject, and it is diametrically opposed to the pure object or 'this'. The 'I' and the 'this' cannot be unified in any whole. They cannot stay together in any common ground. Or what is the same thing, something cannot be both 'I' and 'this' at the same time. If, however, we somehow force them together in a whole, the whole thus constituted will be only an objective whole. The real 'I' or the subject as such cannot be *an element* in any whole. Either it is itself the whole, or it is nothing at all. There is nothing greater than the 'I' of which the 'I' is a part.

It is often argued that ultimate reality must be neither a mere object nor a mere subject. A mere object and a mere subject are only abstractions. Reality that is concrete must be a unity of the subject and the object. It must be subject-object. 'I know x' is an example of subject-object unity. Only it is partial. To make it complete, there must be an

all-inclusive experience. Nothing is here left out. It is the Absolute. This is the only genuine form of what may be called the ultimate spiritual reality.

It is evident now that the Absolute Experience thus understood is not without differences. It is the nature of the object to be differentiated. Since the object is united to the subject in knowledge, the whole thus constituted will be differentiated also. It will be a new kind of object. The so-called unity of the subject and the object is transformed into another object, which can in its turn be known. We find an analogy for this in ordinary knowledge. I know x. But on reflection, I can know my *knowledge of* x or the fact that *I knew* x. The *knowledge of* x is thus only a more complex object. We can increase this complexity indefinitely. The knowledge of all possible objects will be only a more extended or a more complex object. But still it will be something objective, and so determinate and finite. If it includes the subject, it includes it only *as determined by,* or *as coordinated to, the object.* The real subject or the real 'I', that is not an object of any kind, is never included. It stands outside this so-called whole, which is presentable to it. What is presentable cannot include that to which it is presentable. The 'I' or the real subject is in a category by itself. It is itself the whole. There is no whole that is greater than 'I' and so inclusive of 'I'. The subject-object whole is no exception to the rule. The view that this whole is both concrete and ultimate cannot stand criticism. What can take its place? The only thing that can take its place is the whole that is non-determinate and non-objective. This is the pure subject or the Self. It gives reality to all objects (for all objects are something *to it* only), but takes nothing from the objects. It is essentially unrelated and in-itself.

The Self, we said, is the only thing that is directly known. There is nothing that is more direct or more immediate. It is self-revealing too. Accordingly, if there is any doubt or misunderstanding about it, it can be easily dissipated on reflection. All we have to do is to attend to it for what it is. It is in this

respect different from all other things in the second or the third person, all things that are present or absent. We cannot possibly know the inmost being of these other things. We know them only from outside. Since intuition fails us, we use our imagination. We are supposed to know the second person directly. But however direct this knowledge, we cannot know the self of another in the same direct way as we know our own self. The third person, 'he', is still more removed from the intuition of 'I', and the element of imagination in it is naturally greater. In other words, the intuition of 'I' is the absolute limit of all directness. It is in this sense the very ideal of all knowledge. Nothing can be known better or more directly. If we want to know anything perfectly, we must so relate it to 'I' that it becomes indistinguishable from 'I'. The nearer it is to the form of 'I', the better it is known. The limit is reached when the thing we want to know is just *identical* with 'I' and *is* 'I'.

Of all the ways of knowing Brahman, this alone is then the crowning phase,—Brahman is my very Self (*tattvamasi*). When we know Brahman as the creator (*taṭasthalakṣaṇa*), we know Him very much as a third person. He is then merely the impersonation of greatness and power. When we know Brahman through His essential qualities (*svarūpalakṣaṇa*), we know Him as a spiritual entity having those qualities which we directly find only in our own Self. Brahman becomes a greater Self or a transcendent Self. But still we keep Him outside of us and above us. He becomes a kind of an Over-soul. Our knowledge of Brahman is still deficient. We can perhaps claim communion through *feeling,* but literal knowledge is lacking. This knowledge becomes complete and absolute, only when we know Brahman as our very Self and as having no other relation to It except that of literal identity (*aham brahmāsmi*).

The Great Creator is no other thing than our inmost Self (*pratyagātman*). Here we shed all those accidents of Brahman which keep Him outside and make Him external to us. The inwardness of our knowledge of Brahman becomes

complete. But at the same time, the great qualities of Brahman are retained and added to our intuition of the Self. The Self is not generally known to be great or powerful or infinite or all-pervading or blissful, etc. Brahman brings all these qualities to the Self. The Self is now known in a new light. It has those very qualities which Brahman has. This is a new knowledge both of Brahman and the Self. Brahman was not known to be as immediate as the Self is. This is an addition to our knowledge of Brahman,—an addition which makes the knowledge complete. The Self was not known to be great, non-dual, etc. This is an addition to our knowledge of the Self, — an addition which makes our knowledge more significant.

The relation of identity is not a real relation. If it is true, it is eternally true. One thing cannot *become identical* with another. Either it is *always identical,* or it is *always different* and so can never become identical. The identity of the Self and Brahman is an eternally accomplished identity. Only we are ignorant of it. When this ignorance is removed, we begin to think that the identity is made or established. That is clearly an error. The Self always *was* and *shall remain* Brahman. Only our ignorance of this identity is removed. That alone introduces a sort of novelty and a sense of achievement in our knowledge. In point of fact, we only know what we already knew in a way in our own being.

Of all the methods of knowing Brahman, the method of identity is the most important. It not only *completes* our knowledge, but it also fulfils all other attributes of Brahman. This knowledge by identity is not judgmental. We do not *describe* Brahman or add anything by way of qualification to Brahman. We just intuit Brahman pure and simple. Let us take some instances of knowledge by identity. We say, "The person you were looking for is this very person", or "Devadutta you met at Banaras is this man", etc. In all such cases we know the identity, which is real and present, of two entities which are distinguished in thought. All we do in order to know the identity is to reject from the terms the accidents

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of time, place and circumstance, which divide them and make them appear two. The two are only seemingly different. In point of truth, they are just one and the same entity. To know the difference is not a problem for us. We just start with it. The problem is about the unity. It is the knowledge of the unity that is rewarding, and that demands both effort and discernment. The entities which are separated in thought have a literal identity. We have ignorance about this identity; and it is this ignorance that demands to be removed. It is removed by dropping the accidental differences and recognising the essential identity.

The same is true about the knowledge of Brahman. The difference between Brahman and the individual self is known to all. It is our starting point. It is the identity that is hidden from us. We need to recognise this identity; and when we do so, two substances do not become one. There is only one real substance which has appeared to us under two different names and two different forms. *Jīva* and Brahman have literal identity. Only we must reject those characters of each which are incompatible with the essential reality of the other. Brahman must lose its outsidedness and distantness; and *jīva* must lose its embodied character and the finitude that comes from it.

PART II

THE SELF

(Transcendental Psychology)

CHAPTER XIII

METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES

Brahman, as described by the scripture, is only an idea of reason. This idea does not amount to knowledge. All the scriptural statements bearing on the *nature* of Brahman are accordingly of secondary importance (*avāntara vākya*). We know what Brahman is like. We do not know *the reality* called Brahman. We know this when we know it as the Self. For the Self is not a mere idea. It is some kind of reality which we claim to know directly.

Nobody does, or can, deny the reality of his self. But when he *thinks* of the self and tries to know it, he goes astray. What he knows is some kind of *object*. This object does not come up to his idea of the self as a permanent entity; and so he begins to doubt the reality of the self. It is possible however that our thought perverts the self in the attempt to know it. It mixes up the self with elements drawn from the not-self, and the mixture cannot possibly come up to our notion of the self based upon a deeper intuition. All those sceptical philosophers therefore who do not find any evidence of the self in their common experience are unconsciously subscribing to the view that there is this deeper intuition. If this were not so, they would not argue against the reality of the self, but would simply equate this reality with the object-self which they find in experience. There should be no ground for their sceptical conclusion that the self which they find does not deserve to be called a self and that therefore there is no real self. The truth is that the sceptics are fully aware that nobody would accept their version of the self as true to reality or as what everyone in fact understands or means by the self. The natural instinct, or better still intuition, of humanity would not accept the view that the self is an object of a kind or part of the moving mental drama.

The truth is that we have two distinct and opposed intuitions of reality. There are things which fall under the general designation of "this". As opposed to all objects, we have the intuition of "I". Nobody would ever knowingly say, "*This* is I." He would only say, "This is *to me*." What is given to me can under no circumstances be my self. The self thus stands outside all objects, as a unique entity, not presentable in any way.

We have here two forms of reality,—"this" and "I"—which comprehend all other forms, and which are diametrically opposed to each other in nature. We can distinguish them with unerring certitude, as we can distinguish light and darkness. If such is the case, then any experience which mixes up these two opposed forms of reality, as when we say, 'I am the body', 'I am thought or mind', etc., must be an erroneous experience due to ignorance or lack of thought. While therefore nobody ever says "*This* is I," we do say "I am this" in error.

The error of confusing the self with the not-self is not only common, it is almost natural and beginningless. We are born with it. It is the basis of all our experience and all our knowledge of things. We first confuse the self with the not-self, and then we function with the body and the mind, and make use of the various methods of knowledge. At the root of all knowledge thus lies this fundamental error of mutual superimposition or *adhyās* of two diametrically opposed entities. Small wonder that all our knowledge is essentially dominated by error and ignorance. Before we use a method of knowledge, we have already committed error or *adhyāsa*. There is no pure or error-free method of knowledge.

It may now be argued that since we cannot deny either the Self or the not-Self in our experience, the two together constitute what may be called Ultimate Reality. The Self or the ultimate subject is real and the world represented by the term "this" is also real. There is thus an ultimate metaphysical dualism. This view, in our opinion, is not true. If we

put the Self and the not-Self side by side as equally true forms of reality, we lose the essence of their distinction and opposition. The Self is degraded to a kind of object comparable with other objects. It completely loses its uniqueness as the pure and the ultimate subject. The level of duality is the level where objects alone can be real. The true Self, which is never an object, can find no place there. The Self represents a different metaphysical level altogether. The level where the Self is real is the level where nothing *beside* the Self can be real. In other words, the reality of the Self is incompatible with the reality of an objective world. We have therefore a choice: either the world of objects is real or the Self. Both cannot be real at the same time and in the same sense. If the one is real the other is not, and vice-versa. It is the *given-ness* of the objects that makes them real to us. But the Self just lacks this given-ness. There is no common ontological character in respect of which both the world and the Self can be declared real.

We said we have a choice. How do we respond to it? There is a natural temptation to regard the objective world as real, and the Self as having only a subordinate and a secondary kind of reality. Nobody is quite as sure of his Self which he cannot easily detect through introspective observation as he is sure of the world around him. Many philosophers have therefore tried to explain away our feeling of the self in terms of certain elements of the not-self and their relations. They have come to the conclusion that there is no entity which deserves to be called the self. Any appearance to the contrary can only be described as an illusory appearance. What is real behind the appearance are certain mental states which are related in a certain way with each other and with the body. This is, in our opinion, a very crude and superficial analysis of the self. It is motivated by the desire to explain the self in terms of what we can introspectively observe or in terms of certain objects of experience. It is our contention however that it is absurd to try to explain the self in terms of certain elements drawn from the not-self. Our fundamental intuition of the self belies all such explanations.

Let us however suppose, for the sake of argument, that the world of objects is the reality. In that case, the self can only be an appearance, and an illusory appearance at that. But then will this not affect the reality of the objects? Objects *minus* their relation to the intelligent and non-objective self are nothing at all. They cannot appear. Simply put, the world is something *to me*. Take away its relatedness to my self, and it collapses. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the self lends reality to the world. It is the only ground behind the appearance of the world. The hypothetical thing-in-itself cannot be this ground. It is not only unknown and unknowable, but it can only be conceived as an object of a sort. An object of a sort however cannot stand apart from the world as the ground of the world,—it can only form part of the world that is supposed to be grounded. The Self is the only real ground. But then it would be paradoxical to say that the world is real and the Self unreal or illusory. It would be a reversal of true ontological values.

Let us now take the other alternative. The Self is the reality. In that case, the world cannot be treated as real. It can only be treated as an appearance of a sort, necessarily illusory in character. No contradiction is involved here; for the Self is intolerant of the *reality* of a world, it is not intolerant of the *appearance* of a world. An appearance does not challenge the reality of the substance behind it—it thrives on it and is grounded in it. This substance we have seen is the intelligent Self. The world is *necessarily related* to It, but the Self is not necessarily related to the world.

Advaita Vedanta develops this relation of dependence of the world upon the Self to its logical conclusion. The world is found to be illusory in character. It finds in the intuition of the Self a firm ground for the knowledge of super-sensible reality. All we have to do is to develop this knowledge. We develop it when we purify our intuition of the Self of all the accretions of the not-Self. The Self is not the body, the mind, the intellect, etc. It is that Intelligence which is beyond them all and which informs them all. When we know the Self thus,

we find that there can be nothing greater or more exalted than the Self. Verily it is Brahman.

The scripture speaks of the world as created by the Great God or Iśwara. But we too create the world which we perceive in our own way. The world is something *to us*. The Self is thus the ground of the world. The subjectivity of our knowledge clearly affects the object. This subjectivity reaches its most clear, definite and significant form in the knowledge of the illusory. Is not all our knowledge like that? Is not all our knowledge a diluted and unrecognised form of erroneous knowledge, which creates its objects? The real is never created. The illusory alone is created. Are we not performing the miracle of creation when we perceive the world?

The metaphysical categories as we have stated them here pose a metaphysical problem. What is the ultimate truth? Are both the sensible and the super-sensible equally real? Is the world real? Advaita Vedānta is an attempt to answer these questions on the basis of our experience.

CHAPTER XIV

IMMEDIACY OF THE SELF

The most important characteristic of the Self is its immediacy (*pratyaktva*). All other things real are external to us (*parāk*). The Self is just the opposite (*pratyak*). We often interpret immediacy as a relational character of things. Things are said to be immediate when they are related to us in a certain way, which we describe as "being directly intuited." It is the way of knowledge called *pratyakṣa.*

We naturally ask, what things are directly intuited? Sensible things are certainly the most important of them all. But a thing, however directly intuited, has still to be distinguished from the intuition of it. This becomes possible, because thought mediates to give form to the thing. No intuition can dispense with thought altogether; and no intuition can contact the thing directly without such mediation. The result of this mediation is that the thing is not known as it is in itself, but only as it is formed or made by thought. We only know an ideal construction. There is no genuine intuition here. When we have this genuine intuition, no error or doubt is possible. Error and doubt are due to the intervention of thought in the knowledge of things. Accordingly, objects of sensible intuition, however clearly sensed, are still open to doubt and error. They are immediate only in a relative or secondary sense or from a practical point of view. They are not immediate in a strictly theoretical sense. Theoretically, our intuition of them is overlaid by thought to such an extent that it is hardly possible to distinguish the intuited core from the accretions of thought. The object as known is, for all theoretical purposes, ideal in character.

Is there anything then that is truly intuited and that is therefore immediate par excellence? No such thing is found in the external world. Is there anything of the kind in the

internal world. or the world of the mind? Taking the Kantian view, there is no distinction between the external and the internal in this respect. Mental occurrents too are objectively known. They are mediated by thought, if not exactly by an internal sense. The objectivity of a mental occurrent emerges only when it is past and when it has become the object of memory or thought. It is in this respect like all other objects which are mediated by thought. At the time a mental state or act is supposed to occur, it has no objectivity. It is presumably one with the intuition of it and is altogether indistinguishable from this intuition. It may be said to be immediate. But then it is just this intuition. It has no body of its own that can be said to fall apart from the intuition. The two are in the relation of identity.

We are thus thrown back upon the basic intuition or awareness. This at least is immediate, if anything is. We may intuit many different things, A, B, C, D, etc. But we have no intuition *of* intuition. Intuition seems to be no object of any kind. Our knowledge of it is not mediated. It is of the nature of the Absolute Subject.

It may here be argued, as the Buddhists of the *Vijñāna-vāda* school did, that our intuition, even when it is divested of all reference to objects, is itself a series of finite and momentary states of pure awareness. They called this series *ālaya-vijñāna* or the store-house of pure intuitions. If this view is accepted, then our intuition itself is differentiated into a series of objects on the analogy of mental objects. We have not advanced a step beyond the latter in the direction of immediacy. We now contend that this apparent discontinuity in our intuitions is a mere appearance. The appearance is due to the relation of the different objects to the intuitive ground which itself is not differentiated or discontinuous. Take away the relation, and nothing is left to differentiate one moment of our intuitive life from another. There is perfect continuity and unity. The intuition at the back of all our knowledge is of the nature of pure intelligence, which in its turn is indistinguishable from the intelligent Self or *ātman*.

The Self is no *object* of intuition. It is the intuition itself. Since there can be nothing more immediate than intuition, the Self is immediate par excellence. The Self and intuition have literal identity.

This however does not mean that the Self under no circumstances and in no sense can be known or can become an object of intuition. The most immediate thing may yet escape our notice. We can be ignorant of it; and if there is ignorance, there can be knowledge too. Only this knowledge would be different from the other species of knowledge called mediate knowledge. It will be immediate knowledge, and will conform to the nature of its object which is immediate. The immediate object is never entirely unknown. It is known to begin with. But this knowledge is compatible with its ignorance. When this ignorance is removed, we merely *recognise* what is already known. The Self, being intelligent and intuitive by its very nature (*sākṣāt-svarûptaḥ-aparokṣa*), is always known. Only, due to our erroneous ways of thinking, it appears to be unknown. Our intellectual recognition of its immediacy removes the appearance. We get back what is always ours, and intimately known.

We commonly say that we do not know our Self. This is clearly evidence of our ignorance. We go farther. We say that our Self somehow includes our body and our mind and constitutes together with them one person. This is evidence of a confusion of thought and error. Ignorance and error demand to be removed. They can best be removed by a discriminative analysis of our experience. The Self is not a non-entity or an unknown entity. It is the best known of entities, because it is self-revealing. We can know it if only we attend to it. We can help this attentiveness if we reject from our normal intuition of the Self those elements which are foreign to the Self and which are clearly of the nature of the not-Self. The normal intuition takes the form "I am *this* or *that*—body, mind, etc". The discriminative process must take the form, "I am *not this, not that* (*neti, neti*)." The end of the process will only come when there is nothing

left to be negated. We then know the real Self. Perhaps all discrimination of the type mentioned above has the tendency to keep the Self apart and treat it as some kind of object. In that case, knowledge through discrimination alone is bound to remain incomplete, and even infected with a slight error. We should then need a leap, with the aid of positive statements or *mahāvākyas* of *Śruti*, from mere discriminative knowledge to unitive knowledge.

The Self, we said, is no object. Still, discrimination of its true nature cannot proceed unless the Self is, erroneously at least, made an object. We can only reflect upon some kind of experience which has an objective reference. There must therefore be a recognised form of experience which relates to the self. Only this experience has, according to our contention, a mixed character. It comprehends both the Self and the not-Self in a false identity.

The Self can be recognised for what it is in this mixed apprehension, because it is *self-evidently true*. Something is self-evidently true, when it is self-luminous or self-revealing (*svaprakāśa*). The self-revealing is not *object* to another and so *known* by another. Is it known to itself? Nothing can know itself as object. The Self is accordingly not known at all. But if it cannot be known, it is certainly *spoken*. It is spoken as what is quite immediate and innermost. We use the word "I" to stand for the Self. The "I" communicates itself to all hearers for what it really is. We never use it for anything that can be presented or known, or for a socialised object. We use it to stand for a unique entity, that is opposed to "this", and that communicates its uniqueness and its pure subjectivity to all hearers. The Self is self-revealing, because it is not known as *this*, but it is capable of being spoken as what is immediate (*avedyatvesati-aparokṣa-vyavahāra-yogyatvam*).

A corollary follows. There cannot be many selfs that are all self-revealing. The many selfs must be known as many. But the moment a self is known, it becomes the not-

self or *jaḍa.* How can manyness of what is self-revealing be ever proved, or even conceived? The very conception becomes self-contradictory. Briefly put, there cannot be two entities both of which are self-revealing (*svaprakāśa*). The one that knows the other reduces it to an object.

Not only there cannot be many Selfs, but the *absence* of the Self too cannot be a possible object of knowledge. We can know the absence of a thing which can in the first instance be itself known. We say a thing is not there, because if it were there it could be seen or known. Since it is not known, it is not there. The knowableness of a thing is thus the presupposition of the knowledge of its absence. The Self is not knowable. How can its absence be known?

It is possible that we look within ourselves for the Self, but do not find it. But then is it the absence of *the real Self* that is proved thereby, or the absence of a false and spurious copy of it? The knower-Self itself can never be denied. But if this Self is there, there is no absence of the Self to be known; and if this Self is absent, who can know the supposed absence? The truth is that neither the knower-Self can know its own absence, nor can another Self, which is precluded from knowing what is by its nature self-revealing.

The Self is by its very nature the Ancient one (*purātana*). It always was. It is never born (*aja*). For who can know the birth of the Self? To know the birth, the Self must be before the birth. As a matter of fact, the Self alone reveals the birth of all things. There is absolutelv nothing to reveal the birth of the Self. The Self is thus in the beginning of all things. But can it not pass away? That too is not possible. The Self must be there in order to know its own passing away. Who can then know its passing awav? But if it has no beginning and no end, it is the Eternal Light of the Spirit. It reveals all things as they come to birth and reveals all things as they go out of existence. It is the *alpha* and the *omega.*

There are various different levels of immediacy with respect to objects. But behind all those levels is the absolute immediacy of the Self. It is the Self that lends its immediacy to objects. No object is as such immediate. Sensible objects are said to be immediate. They are immediate, because they are related to the Self through a sensuous intuition. It is the immediacy of the Self that transfers itself to the objects through this intuition. There is also the reverse process. The objects transfer something of their mediacy or distantness to the Self. The result of this mutual confusion is that the objects appear somehow immediate and the Self mediate. We therefore naturally find it difficult to think of the reality of the Self *without reference to the objects of its knowledge.* The truth however is that the immediacy of the Self is lent to the objects, and the objectivity of the latter is lent to the Self.

The body comes nearer to the Self than objects of external perception. It has so much of the immediacy of the Self that some people find it difficult to distinguish the two easily. We seem unable to think of our Self without a body. And yet the distinction can be made. What happens to the body is something of which the Self is aware. This awareness stands apart from the body and what happens to it. If a limb of the body is cut, the Self is not cut. Still the relationship is so intimate that the body appears to be part of the Self, and the Self as necessarily embodied. There is once again mutual confusion of the Self and the body.

The immediacy of the Self enters into a more intimate relation with the mind, or more generally thought. Most European philosophers do not make any distinction between the mind and the Self. Thought or will or feeling is for them the highest form of spiritual reality. Sometimes they accept a self that thinks or wills. But they cannot answer the question, what is the self *apart from* the thinking and the willing? Is there any entity called the self which is unaffected by what it thinks or wills? All they are prepared to

assert is that the empirical ego which we are supposed to know is at least part of the real self, so that there is no absolute division between what we know of the self and the real self. This is confusion worse confounded. No distinction is made between the ego with its mental functions and the real Self beyond those functions.

Kant did speak of the noumenal Self. But since this Self was regarded by him as unknown and unknowable, it was dropped by the later philosophers as an unnecessary and even a meaningless concept. It was not like the Vedantic Self, self-luminous and self-revealing. That makes a world of difference to the reality of the Self. The noumenal Self was still conceived objectively. The Advaitic conception of the Self is just the opposite. The Advaitic Self cannot be known, but then there is no demand to know it as object. If we are to know it at all, there must be a different kind of approach to it, appropriate to its nature.

Thoughts and other mental states can be distinguished without much difficulty from the self that possesses them. The 'I-form' (*ahaṅkāra*) is a little more difficult to separate. The 'I-form' or the ego is always found in identity with the Self during our waking life. The two are so mixed up together that it is difficult to separate them. But when we go into deep sleep or a state of unconsciousness, the ego falls apart. It does not function. It becomes latent or submerged. The true intelligent Self however remains. It lights up and reveals the absence of the ego and its activities. This breakaway of the ego brings to clear consciousness the distinction between the ego and the Self. The ego comes and goes. It is known. It is a higher form of the object. The Self is never known. It only knows. It illumines all things, including the states of deep sleep, dream and wakefulness.

There are various forms of objectivity, both crude and subtle. The Self is entangled and confused with all these through ignorance. To remove the confusion we must analyse and discriminate. As we progressively discriminate the

Self from various forms of objectivity starting with the sensible objects, the Self becomes more and more pure and true, more and more pervasive, and more and more luminous. When the last vestige of objectivity is shed, the Self has truly become the Universal Self. There is no distinction then between It and Brahman.

CHAPTER XV

IMMUTABILITY OF THE SELF

All things change. Change appears to be universal. But if there is *one thing* that does not change, it is the Self. Without an unchanging self, change itself cannot be apprehended. Universal change is a self-stultifying notion. It involves a fallacy called *jagatāndhya* or nihilism.

It might here be said that a real change in Nature is the presupposition of our apprehension of change. So change as such *does not imply* a changeless consciousness as its ground. Let us now suppose that there is this real change. It is, let us say, a change from *a* to *b*. But if a thing *x* exists at *a* and a thing *y* exists at *b*, there is no change from *a* to *b*. Two different things can exist at two different places at the same time or at two different times. There is no change here. There is change when *the same thing* moves from *a* to *b*. It is immaterial whether *we* are able to apprehend a self-identical entity as undergoing a change of place or a change of state. It is quite possible that the self-identical entity is metaphysical in character, such as pure being or pure subject, and so incapable of being apprehended as object.

Again, the process or movement from *a* to *b* naturally involves time. But time has meaning only in the timeless. The successive moments of time are successive only *in a non-successive consciousness.* This consciousness alone can relate, through the appropriate mental acts, the different moments of a process as successive.

Whether these two immutable entities, the metaphysical ground like pure being and the subjective ground like the self-identical consciousness, are really different or not may be treated as an open question. We have argued earlier that they are not. But consciousness at least is in a way directly known to us. We can be certain that it stands outside every

process and gives meaning to the process. Take away this consciousness, and the process with its successive moments collapses. It has no meaning. What is important for change is not that it should *occur*. Occurrence gives rise to certain awkward problems of causality. Is the effect one with the cause or different form it, etc.? What is important about change is that it should *appear*. The appearance of change is the whole meaning and substance of change.

The notion of real change as distinct from the appearance of change is fraught with many difficulties. When we think of real change, we naturally associate it with some *power* in nature. But is this anything more than a mere *faith?* Power is a wholly subjective concept based upon our experience of willing. The object is necessarily inert and without power. The subject alone has power, and it exercises this power to fashion the object as it likes. Power in the object is a misnomer. How shall we understand power in nature? Shall we not have to make room for demigods? All power refers us back to the subject or the self as the source and the centre of power; and this subject or the self is immutable in the very exercise of power. It changes everything. But it does not itself change in the act. It is prior to the act, continues in the act, stays on after the act, and claims the act as its own. The self brings about the change, but itself remains unchanged. It no doubt appears to act, but it can be distinguished from the act; and it can be distinguished, because the act passes but the real actor does not. In other words, the actless self alone can be said to act. The act attaches to it by a sort of false attribution or a free relationship. That the Self *really acts* is an error of understanding only.

A somewhat poetic view of reality is sometimes put forward. It is said that reality is not static. It is moving and changing. This change has inner unity, continuity and growth. We break up this movement into a string of successive and quite inert moments. We thereby lose the true inwardness of reality. We must recapture this inwardness. We must penetrate the false and intellectualised image of reality as a

string of static moments or events to the throbbing and moving process behind it.

This has a certain romantic appeal to the imagination. But truth is not a matter of imagination. It is a matter of cold reason. Any notion of change, progress, growth, etc is itself an intellectualised image only. It is ridden with static elements. Progress must have a starting point and a goal, both of which are static. Fluidity itself is a relative concept only, having reference to the position left and the position gained. In our mental life itself, where we intuit change and movement directly, there is always transition from incipient desire to the satisfaction of desire. When the desire is satisfied, activity automatically comes to an end. Desire is in this sense the source of all activity, and its satisfaction the goal and the end. Reality cannot be all movement and change. These are relative concepts only. If the static is a false product of the intellect, change and movement that are relative to it are no less so. There is no sense in making change and movement absolute, so that every static element is completely liquidated. Change will lose all meaning that way.

Something must be permanent however we look at the matter, and the Self is the permanent. We can prove this beyond doubt. We can doubt in respect of every object whether it is permanent. All the objects that we know come into being and also pass away. Not a single object that we know is known as unchanging. It is different with the Self. We have the intuition of the self-identity of the Self (*pratyabhijñā*). I am the same self today as I was yesterday. I was young then, now I am old. This recognition of my self-identity through varying states is never cancelled. Our memory of things can deceive us. I can distrust memory, even as I can distrust perception. Both perception and memory are in principle dubitable. The knowledge of the self-identity of the Self is however not a case of memory. All that I remember may be false. But the mere fact of memory, whether true or false, proves the self-identity of the self that has the memory. A person who has an erring memory still

refers to his past self as identical with his present self, and this identity is not cancelled when his memory is corrected. The self-identity of the self is beyond any reasonable doubt.

Let us now suppose that the Self is permanent. But is it not true that the Self is permanent in change? The world changes. Our body changes. So does our mind. The Self is the unchanging in the body and the mind. The truth would appear to be that both the changing and the unchanging are real. Each demands the other; and together they constitute the nature of ultimate reality. This view however is not true. The changing and the unchanging are no doubt both there. But there is a relation of one-sided dependence between them. While all change has a necessary reference to the unchanging and is realised only in the latter, the reverse is not true. Change to be change must be apprehended as change; and this apprehension can only take place in the unchanging consciousness. The latter however does not need to be apprehended at all. It stays in its own nature and is self-revealing as immutable. When it is apprehended in the objective attitude and in relation to change, it has only a relative permanence, not absolute permanence. The latter has no necessary relation to moments of time. It is really out of time. It is related to time only accidentally and for our convenience. We cannot grasp the permanent without relating it to time. But that is only a defect of our understanding. We should be able to know the eternal as it is in itself and without relation to time. However that be, change is appearance, because it is only realised in an immutable consciousness; while the latter is reality, because it has no reference beyond itself, and is therefore a reality-in-itself.

We must recognise that the Self belongs to the order of Eternity. It is the *one witness* of the whole moving panorama of things. Nothing can touch it, nothing affect it. It is only when we falsely identify the Self with some form of objectivity, that it itself appears to be moving, changing and affected. In point of fact, it reveals change but does not itself change.

It is now possible to argue that our whole personality is moving and changing throughout our waking life, and that there is *no clear evidence* of an unchanging consciousness which reveals change; for any such consciousness must *function* in order to know change, and the moment it has functioned, it itself has changed. But even so, how do we know that this consciousness has changed? There must be an unchanging consciousness behind it to reveal it. The unchanging consciousness does not *act* in order to know. It remains actless and pure; and yet it lends its light to reveal things which cannot be otherwise revealed. There may indeed be some difficulty in conceiving how any consciousness can remain unchanged and pure throughout waking life. Consciousness is naturally conceived as a stream or a process, in which the later state inherits the earlier. This is a purely empirical view of consciousness. It ignores the question how any member of the stream of consciousness can know the stream as a whole. Is it through memory? But even memory presupposes a prior perception. One person cannot transmit his memory to another. The person who perceives is the person who has the memory. It is absurd to suppose that one man perceives, while another has the memory. *There must be a unitary consciousness underlying memory and the awareness of change.*

We need not however confine our argument to waking life only. Our experience is wider than wakefulness. Wakefulness is only one of the states through which we pass. There are also the states of dream and deep sleep. We distinguish these states by well-marked characters. In wakefulness we function with our sense-organs and know a world outside. In dreams, we function with the mind alone and move in a world which is purely mental. In what is called deep sleep, we go a step farther and function neither with the sense-organs nor with the mind. We do not function at all. It is a state of complete ignorance in which we are said to know nothing. Yet, when we wake up from this state of deep sleep, we know that we had been in that particular state and that

we had known nothing then. How is this knowledge of a past state of blissful ignorance possible at all? It is only possible on the basis of a unitary and pure objectless consciousness which is present in all the three states and reveals those states. It is called the witnessing consciousness or the *sākṣi*. It alone is the real knower. But it functions under different circumstances and with a different set of instruments. When it functions with the sense-organs and the mind in wakefulness, it is called the knower of sensible objects or *pramātā*. When it functions with the mind alone, it is called the dreamer. When the dream too has subsided, and both the senses and the mind have lapsed, it functions with nothing but itself or as pure consciousness. If the state of ignorance called the state of deep sleep is to be known, it can only be known in this way. If the state in question is sought to be known in any other way or through a mental act, it itself would be annulled. The conclusion is unavoidable that pure consciousness is present in all the states and remains unaffected by them. Here indeed is evidence, if any further evidence is needed, of the permanence of the intelligent self.

In this connection it might be noted that a complete philosophy about the nature of ultimate reality cannot be based merely on our experience in waking life. That experience merely tells us something about the world and about the self as related to the world. On that basis, the Idealistic conclusion becomes quite plausible that the ultimate nature of reality is subject-object, and not subject alone or object alone. But when we widen the basis of our experience to include other states, that view fails to satisfy. In dreams, the subject and the object are not *equally* important. The object here is a pure creation of the subject. It has no being in itself, and it has also no being equal in metaphysical status to that of the subject. In deep sleep again, the object is not available in any form whatsoever; and yet the subject, as a pure objectless awareness cannot be denied. If this awareness were absent, any experience of the state of deep sleep, whether direct or indirect, would become impossible. But if that is

so, the possibility of the pure subject existing in itself and by itself without relation to any object is not difficult to conceive.

Vedanta develops this idea of the pure subject. It alone exists *in itself,* if anything does. At the same time, it is not inert and immobile being; for all free activity, found in the phenomenon of willing, is ultimately to be referred to it as its sole cause. It is *the only actor.* Only this activity is not *part of its nature.* This nature is above both inertness and dynamism. These are, in the last analysis, characteristics of the object, which has no being in itself. They are appearances only. However that be, we cannot deny a reality that is both intelligent and immutable. We call it our true Self or ātman.

CHAPTER XVI

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF OTHER SELFS

All persons agree about the fact of self-consciousness. This consciousness is in principle not different from the consciousness of objects. As a matter of fact, we know the self only in relation to objects. It is the knower of objects. This is the ground for the Idealistic thesis that the relation of the self to objects is a necessary relation. Neither term has any meaning without the other.

We cannot however help thinking that self-consciousness is in a privileged position. The objects that we know are in a sense foreign to the knowledge of them. They are external. They are sensible and materialistic. We cannot quite know them from within. They are mere appearances to the self. They may even be spoken of as having been *posited* by the self. If they are more than appearance, they are still foreign to the self and so in a way mysterious. This is not the case with the self. We appear to know the self from within or as the self really is. It is therefore an ideal object of knowledge. If we want to know the highest or the most metaphysical reality, we naturally like to know it as we know the self. Hegel's Absolute was accordingly conceived on the basis of self-consciousness. That was the only perfect kind of knowledge. Reality that was not foreign to the subject that knows it must be known by itself. The Absolute Idea as object must be known by the Absolute Idea as subject.

This view of self-knowledge as the perfect kind of knowledge is however open to certain objections. One and the same entity cannot be both subject and object at the same time. The subject-function and the object-function are diametrically opposed to each other. The object can only be *other* to the subject; and what is *other* to the subject cannot be the same

thing as the subject. Objects have something in common, they are *given to* a subject. But there is nothing in common between the subject and the object. The subject *as such* cannot be given. The moment it is treated as given, it is degraded to an object. It ceases to be the subject it was. It ceases to be the knower. As a matter of fact, when we distinguish the subject from the object and know it as related to the object, it has already ceased to be the subject. What we are knowing is an objectified image which has little resemblance to the original reality. The original reality was incapable of any determination, while the objectified image is nothing if it is not determined. This is why we think that Kant's distinction of phenomenal self and noumenal self was so important. Only Kant invested the noumenal self with some kind of mystery. We think that the mystery can be unravelled, if we stick to the true subject. The true subject always stays in the back-ground. It refuses to come forward in order to be known. It cannot be distinguished from anything. Only an object can be distinguished from another object. The real subject is the undistinguished ground of all objects. More than that. It is self-revealing to thought as the Absolute Subject, not to be known in the objective attitude. If thought must seek a more perfect knowledge of it, it must approach it in some other way appropriate to the subject-matter. The duality of knowledge and the subject-object distinction must be transcended. There is such a thing as non-dual knowledge. We must see the spirit with the eye of the spirit, and not with the sensuous eye which colours all our knowledge of the world.

The self is indicated by the term 'I'. The 'I' stands for no kind of objective entity. We can never say, "this is I". This has, induced certain philosophers to argue that the term 'I' does not stand for any entity which deserves to be called 'I', and that therefore it should be analysed away into some kind of relation between mental states which are called "mine". There is no self-identical entity called a self. But even these philosophers cannot dispense with the use of this so-called

misleading term 'I', and substitute for it any kind of objective relation that we know. If the term 'I' stands for no single or unique entity, why use it at all to confirm the popular misapprehension in this respect? It cannot be merely a matter of convenience, when this convenience is based upon a popular error. Why do the philosophers in question revert to the popular way of expressing themselves, if they are convinced that that way leads to an erroneous belief that there is some entity that deserves to be called 'I'? The truth is that their analysis will easily be seen to be non-sensical, if they attempted to express their personal experience in neutral and non-personal terms. The use of the term 'I' is not only natural and legitimate, but it is also necessitated if we want to make ourselves intelligible. No one has really a problem of meaning about the 'I' or the self. The speaker has no doubt as to what he is referring to when he uses the term 'I'; and the hearer understands him perfectly and does not confuse the 'speaking I' with any neutral or public entity or with his own self. We *make* a problem of meaning when we disregard this common understanding, and want to *know* the kind of entity for which the term 'I' is used. We have already seen that we can never succeed in this, because the self is no kind of *object* which we can know; and yet the use of the term is perfectly significant.

Let us suppose that this argument is true. But then does not the *objectivity* of the self come in, in another way, and thus vitiate our conclusion that the self is immediate and non-objective? I use the term 'I' to stand for my self. You use the same term 'I' to stand for your self. Thus in truth and in fact, the term 'I' is used for two different entities. You use it to stand for x, and I use it to stand for y. The x and the y, my self and your self, are certainly not the same self. They are two different selfs. But if that is so, 'I' can stand for two different entities which can be contemplated as two, though not directly known as two. Does not 'I' then mean some kind of object which can be distinguished from some other object, which is for convenience called 'you', but which

can be called 'I' when the person concerned becomes himself the speaker?

Here, it appears to us, there is a confusion of stand-points. If I use the word 'I' to stand for my self, I cannot significantly use the term to stand for your self or any other self at any time whatsoever. Your self is only 'you' to me, never 'I'. The 'I' can therefore never be used logically for two different entities. Indeed the term 'you' can be used to stand for many different entities. But then all those entities are only *objects* to me, spiritual only in a secondary or derivative sense. They are supposed to be *like* 'I'. But are they *actually* 'I'? If they were, they would be indistinguishable from me; for there is only one 'I' that is directly intuited or that is immediate, and that therefore deserves to be called 'I'. All other selfs that are called 'you' are just objects to me; and nothing that is an object can ever be properly called 'I' or be the same thing as 'I'.

If there is only one entity that can genuinely be called 'I', does that mean that there are no other selfs as spiritual as my self? Other selfs are 'you' to me. I have direct spiritual intercourse with them through the medium of language. There is a sense in which I can be said to have a direct intuition of them under the form 'you'. Thus there are many different selfs. Selfs that are in some sense objective to me are also selfs. They are differently spoken. We address them as 'you'. They call themselves 'I'. The term 'I' is not the only term by which the self can be spoken or meant. A certain amount of objectivity is quite compatible with selfhood. There can be such a thing as a community of selfs, in which each is equal to each.

We cannot accept this view. It will be noted that our intuition of 'you' is not primary. If 'I', then 'you'. Unless I first intuit my self, I cannot intuit other selfs. The intuition of my self however is primary. It presupposes no other intuition and no intuition of 'you'. I proceed from I to you, never in the reverse direction. 'You' is something or some-one *to*

me. I must be there before 'you' has any meaning. *Like all objects, 'you' presupposes me.* *'You'* is merely the person 'spoken to'. Unless there is the speaking 'I', there is no such thing as the person 'spoken to'. And then what do I know of 'you'? I do not know this someone called 'you' *from within,* as I know my self from within. 'You' is never known as a reality 'in itself', but only as a reality that is *to* me. There is no direct intuition of 'you' co-ordinate with the intuition of 'I'.

It may now be argued that our lack of direct intuition of other selfs need not prove that there are no other selfs quite as spiritual as my self. After all other selfs use the term 'I' for themselves, and the term 'you' to designate my self. It is a matter of reciprocity. To save my selfhood, I must concede selfhood to others. The *Saṁkhya* stand-point on this matter appears to be quite rational. According to it, the self that is freed can perceive other selfs no longer. But other selfs, who are struggling for emancipation, do not cease to exist on that account. Non-perception is no reason for non-existence. My universe may be made of my self and what it perceives. The universe of another self may be made of his self and what that self perceives. There is no contradiction in there being as many universes as there are selfs. There need not be a single universe inclusive of all other universes.

The difficulty of this view is that there is *no possible stand-point* from which we can contemplate the so-called many universes. The only stand-point is the stand-point of what is called the individual self. But since the individual cannot transcend his own universe, he can only contemplate other so-called universes as part of his own and included therein. It is just like "many other selfs contained in the universe of a single dreamer". When this dreamer's dream is dissipated and he sees no other, there is *really no other.* Other souls and their stand-points are dissipated with the dream. *There is no logical justification for sticking to a belief that has no rational ground and that is merely an uncriticised common-sense belief.* Either my stand-point, from which *there is no*

other, is fictitious, or the stand-point from which there *is* an other and there *are* other selfs is fictitious. There can be no compromise between the two stand-points. But the stand-point from which there are many selfs *is fictitious;* for it is after all the stand-point of the individual, who is a law unto himself. If he sees no other, there is really no other from any stand-point that is available. What we cannot do is to exalt the individual's state of ignorance of other selfs into a final state of illumination and of perfect freedom. The *Saṅkhya* logic would seem to support this error.

An entity that excludes another entity at any level whatsoever is naturally limited by the latter. Such a limited entity is no longer a genuine self-luminous self. It is degraded to the status of all objects. There cannot be, in the very nature of the case, many real self-luminous selfs. That would be a self-contradiction in terms.

We cannot accept the *reality* of many selfs, but we cannot deny the *appearance* of the same. The real Self is one and one only. It is not the apparent self or the self in relation. The self in relation is not self-luminous and self-revealing. The self-revealing Self can however be spoken of as revealing itself as *objective reality in an ultimate sense* to the intellect as its own subjective function. In this sense, the Self can be said to be known by Itself. The Self has no natural division into subject and object and cannot therefore literally know itself. But it can thus divide itself when it has taken on the limitation of the Intellect. Self-consciousness in this higher sense of knowing the self-revealing absolute reality is possible.

CHAPTER XVII

FREEDOM OF THE SELF

It is a common notion among philosophers that reality is not inert. It is active and creative. It may be a sort of vital force, a primordial centre of power that is perpetually creating new and higher forms of life. Matter is only a devitalised and dead form of this reality having a downward tendency. Others define reality, at all its levels, in terms of a certain power to act or what may be called creativity. There are no substances, there are only centres of creative power. Yet others hold the view that reality is indicated by the active relations in which things enter,—the influences which they both receive and exert. In short, anything that is purely passive and inert is as good as nothing at all.

Whatever the value of these different views about reality, they do not make clear the nature of that reality which is supposed to wield power or to act. What appears to be certain is that *mere appearance* can have no power. Its whole being is exhausted in the appearance, which is something only *to* some-one else. Only a *thing-in-itself* can have power. It is more than its appearance and is at the back of the appearance. It has a reserve of being. It is a sort of a soul or a self within a body. The body can appear, the soul does not. May be, matter has in its own nature this kind of self-being or independent being. But then we must distinguish its inner soul from its appearance to us, and also seek to get at the former as distinct from the latter.

As it is, we know the appearance of things to us and the behaviour of things. We do not know the reality that lies behind the behaviour and the appearances. If we want to enliven things and *endow them with real power,* we must put a spiritual force behind the appearances; and this spiri-

tual force can only be conceived on the analogy of our own free being and free agency that we directly know. In other words, reality outside is "like we are",—spiritual within and material without. We imaginatively recreate all reality in our own image, not excluding physical reality. "Everything that is" can be divided into an appearance, including behavioural appearance, and that which sustains the appearance but does not itself appear. When we think of the world outside as *real* and as capable of imposing a limitation upon us or as challenging our will, we are merely recreating the world in our own image and endowing it with a spiritual kind of being on the analogy of our own being. If then we want to understand the external world from the inside and as it is in itself, we must cease to look to its external behaviour for the key to its inner nature. We must rather look within ourselves. It is literally true to say, "I am the life and I am the light of all that is". If we want to know the real truth about the macrocosm, we must dive deep within us and study the microcosm.

Bergson advised us just the other way. For him, the great world was a reality by itself. We can only know the truth about it in a way appropriate to that world. We must enter into the real life-stream of the world through a kind of sympathetic insight or intuition. It appears to us that this is mere imagination or poetry, not intuition proper. We can never *intuit power* in the object or that which is given to us from the outside. We can only intuit power where it rightly belongs. All power is the power of volition, and all volition belongs to a self. We know only one such self, and that is our own self. The self is, in a sense, the only source of life and movement. It is the only thing really alive.

We often talk of free will. But it is not the will that is free, it is the self that is free. The will has a mixed character. That we will at all is due to desire. No desire, no will. The determining force of desire cannot therefore be wholly eliminated from the purest will. But on the other hand, will is the only expression of the freedom of the self.

To will is to will freely. There is no such thing as willing by compulsion. While therefore the will has a mixed character, the self is pure freedom. That is its very nature. Whether the self acts in a particular way, or in the opposite way, or not at all, its freedom is not affected even in the least. The freedom of the self is beyond all its supposed expressions in action. It is of the nature of being itself. We can truly say that being itself is freedom.

But how is this possible? Being appears to be one thing and freedom another. Being is static and freedom dynamic. Being merely is or exists, while freedom acts and moves. It is possible therefore to set freedom above being and talk of *freedom beyond being,* or conversely to set being above freedom and talk of *pure being that is beyond all freedom.* What we cannot do, it is argued, is to make being and freedom coalesce in one and the same reality, and talk of freedom that is being and vice-versa.

Let us now consider these different ways of understanding the relation between being and freedom. (a) *Freedom beyond being.* It is argued that the dynamic power of creativity or the will is above that which is willed or created. What is created is something determinate. It is static and has the nature of *being.* The power to create is the higher reality. It is freedom beyond being. We may call it the principle of creativity. But can we really stop with this principle? All power and all creativity can only subsist in some kind of superior or uncreated being. Power issues from being and is dependent upon it. It may be exercised or it may not be exercised. But it is not something that exists just in itself. We find this most eminently true in the case of our self. Here power belongs to the self. The self exercises this power when it wills. This is our *only* experience of power or creativity. What the self creates are the acts, which can be put forth or withdrawn. Acts lead us back to the will, and the will, which is the only expression of power, to the freedom beyond the will. This real freedom is indistinguishable from the changeless or immutable being

of the self. The view that freedom goes beyond being takes being in the restricted sense of created being. But created being is not real being, it is only illusory being. The real being is the uncreated being. This being alone creates if anything creates. It is the creator. Freedom is another name for it.

(b) Let us now take the second alternative,—being is beyond freedom. We often say,—"I am free". This is interpreted to mean that freedom *belongs to* the self. Now, there is a sense in which the expression "belongs to" is used to express identity between the thing and what belongs to it. When we say that each thing and each person has a nature, we do indeed appear to make a distinction and relate the two terms by saying that the nature belongs to the thing or the person. If the proposition, however, is true, then it does not express any *real relation* between the two terms. It merely expresses the relation of identity. The nature is the thing, or the nature is the person. There is no distinction. It is only a way of saying that nature belongs to the person or the thing. The truth is that the person or the thing is nothing apart from the nature.

It is possible however that we do not accept this analysis. We can argue that the distinction is real, and yet one thing can belong to another. But here the relation of 'belonging to', can only be understood as the result of a false identification. One thing cannot really belong to another. It can only belong to itself. In order to belong to another, there must be a false ascription or a false identification. What does not really belong is made to belong through an act of the will. It is in this sense that the house belongs to me or even the body belongs to me. Does freedom belong to the self in the same sense? In that case, the self in its own nature must be not-free. It is a false proposition to say that the self is free. But if that is so, the self easily becomes non-spiritual and non-dynamic like all created things. It ceases to be the actor and the creator.

That is not all. What about freedom? The house can belong to me, because it is independent of me. If it does not belong to me, it will at least continue in its own being. But can we say the same thing about freedom? Is it anything in itself? Can it continue to exist apart from any relation to the self? Evidently not. It must inhere in the self or it is nothing at all. The relation to the self is fundamental to it.

The truth is that a dead and inert sort of reality cannot wield power or appear to act with freedom. As a false appearance of being can only be grounded in real being, so the very appearance of efficiency and of freedom can only be grounded in real efficiency and real freedom. The self is in this way the ultimate ground of being, power and freedom. These are not distinct elements or aspects of it. They constitute a real indivisible unity, so that being is the same thing as power, and power is the same thing as freedom. They are different only in our approach to reality, not in reality itself.

We conclude that freedom is not beyond being, nor is being beyond freedom. Both those alternatives are untenable. Freedom is the very nature of being. The self is not only free, it is freedom itself. Like intelligence, freedom here is substantival, not a quality. The Self is without qualities. It is indivisible in nature. But this nature can be described in different ways in accordance with the different questions that we can raise with regard to it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SELF AS INFINITE JOY

The Self is being, the Self is intelligence, the Self is Freedom, etc. These are some of the statements which are not difficult to understand. All we have to do is to transform the mere adjective into a substantive,—intelligent into intelligence, free into freedom, etc. But it is not easy to understand that the Self is joy. The Self is not always full of joy, as it is always intelligent and free. It may have joy or pain or neither.

We can, however, note an intimate relation between freedom and joy. If someone is free, he is also joyful; if he is not free, he is the very opposite. Joy is a natural accompaniment of freedom. Conversely, everything that is a limitation of our freedom, everything that is a sort of bondage, gives us pain and unhappiness. As our shackles are removed one by one and we regain our freedom gradually, we are filled with bounding joy. Imprisonment or detention, however free from physical discomfort, cannot fail to weigh heavily upon the mind and detract from its natural happiness.

Our empirical life in the body is full of bondage of various kinds, and so it is naturally painful. We are subject to hunger and thirst, heat and cold, pain and passion, etc. The body as such is a bondage. We have to suffer all the changes of state to which it is open, through causes both within and without. We are afraid of an endless variety of things that might happen to us. Embodied existence can never therefore be a condition of real inner joy. This joy can only be sought in a state of being which is essentially and fundamentally *disembodied,* whatever that may mean. It is some kind of non-empirical and transcendent being, which we call divine.

The physical body is not the only source of bondage. If it were, we could possibly end the relation of the body artificially and become free from the bondage of the body. The whole

past of the individual is behind him, and binds him even more firmly, although subtly. All moralists are bound to recognise that our freedom at any point of time is limited by what we actually are and have been. We are essentially historical entities. We cannot turn our back upon our entire past and act as though we had no past. The dead weight of the past is always with us, restricting our efforts and determining them to a more or less extent. We can never cut ourselves adrift from our past and act in perfect freedom.

Our freedom and our bondage are both patent facts, competing with each other every moment of our life and complicating all our decisions. The causal law is present and operative even in our moral life, which is commonly regarded as a perfect expression of freedom. The past determines the present, and the present determines the future. We are what we are, because of what we have been or what we have made ourselves to be; and we shall be in the future what we make ourselves to be here and now. This is called the law of *karma* or the law of causality in the moral sphere. We are determined in no small measure by our *karma* or our past actions. It is a very potent form of bondage.

We are no doubt free. But we are free under definite limitations. Our freedom is not a kind of perfectly unpredictable eccentricity. There is a continuity of character between the past and the present. Thus both absolute freedom without reference to any determining factors and absolute bondage without reference to any element of freedom can be ruled out. We are by our own essential nature free. But as actors, we are determined by the law of all actions. We must seek to be free from the law. The causal chain must be broken, so that we are absolutely free in fact and in spirit. When this causal chain is broken,—and it can perhaps be broken through various different ways,—our empirical existence, which is conditioned by the law, is automatically dissolved. Our bondage is then terminated for good, and we realize the perfect freedom of our own nature. At the level of action, we renounce all fruit of action, and become completely dispassionate. At the level of devo-

ton, we seek God's grace, which can wash out all our sins and undo the past. At the level of knowledge, we realize that pure essence of our being, which is unaffected by the results of action and untainted by sin. Each of these ways can be potent, but there is nothing to beat the last, which cuts at the very root of all bondage in general and embodied existence in particular.

It might be argued here that our goal of shedding empirical existence is too indefinite and may never be realized. Why not accept empirical existence as it is, with all its ups and downs, its uncertainties, its sorrows, its rewarding successes, etc? The mere freedom to struggle in the moral and intellctual sphere has its own thrills. It is evident, however, that struggle in itself is never a joy. It is only a means to an end. The end is always triumph over all forces of opposition and of coercion. It is always perfect freedom, which is a joy in itself and an end in itself. But how shall we achieve this? Our achievements through our own efforts in the moral sphere are bound to be extremely meagre and the goal infinitely distant. We want a method which will cut at all bondage, including the bondage of the causal law. We have found that method in knowledge. However that be, we do need release from the bondage of embodied existence. That is never a desirable state of being. It is a state of pain and frustration. Our best joys are mixed with pain. The sweetest cup has a bitter aftertaste. We are almost humanly certain that every so-called joy is a trap and a deceit. We have constantly to be on our guard that we are not being cheated by illusory joys. We naturally therefore become reflective in the best of our joys. The moment we do that and retreat within ourselves, our dissatisfaction begins. We are perhaps best satisfied, only when we are least reflective and most thoughtless. We can then enjoy the pleasures of life, at all its levels, without let or hindrance. A reflective person finds no reason to be happy. He is torn between ideals and actualities. The fleeting joys of empirical existence cease to impress him. He longs for that joy which is a pure joy without any admixture and which

can fulfil him completely. That alone can appeal to him as the crowning phase of his destiny.

Empirical existence is under bondage to the law—the *karmic law*. The finite individual or the historical person is tossed about on the waves of *saṁsāra* or worldly life. There is no real freedom for him, no real joy. History has made him, and history will continue to make and unmake him. There is no escape from finitude for him, except through realization of his infinite Self in Knowledge. This Self is an eternally accomplished and non-historical Self. It is at the back of the finite self, always present, always refulgent and always immediate. To know this Self is to know that which is beyond the law. It is the Self of perfect freedom and perfect joy. Knowledge of it alone can break the bonds of empirical life and give us that immortality which is our ultimate goal and the highest value.

The joy of the Self is not the joy that is produced through outside causes. It is the *nature* of the Self. The Self itself is joy. This can be proved by a simple argument. We all love the Self. We love other things also. But we do not love them for their own sake. We love them for the sake of the Self. All things are dear for the sake of the Self. The Self is not dear for the sake of anything else. Our love of the Self is thus the only unconditioned love. Or what is the same thing, the Self is the only thing that is loved for its own sake; and it is loved for its own sake, because its very nature is joy.

It may be said that the being of the Self and the joy of the Self are two different things. Being itself can never be joy. Being is mere being. We may be able to have a feeling about this being. But it will have no particular value. *To be* is not a value in itself. If being is to have value, it must be conjoined with joyful activity. It is the absence of this activity that makes ordinary life dull and uninteresting. Some people are so disappointed and frustrated in their efforts, that they even go to the lengh of putting an end to their lives. If the being of the Self were itself joy, nobody would ever put an end to his life. Being is only joyful when it is filled with joyful activity.

CHAPTER XIX

PURITY OF THE SELF

A thing is said to be pure when there is no admixture of a different kind of thing with it. It has a uniform nature. It is evident however that what appears to be quite uniform to us is still affected and influenced by other things. It changes from within. What sort of uniformity of nature can really belong to it in the circumstances? Can we determine it to be *this* or *that?* The moment we do that, it has changed and become different.

The world, as we know it, is a whole of inter-acting parts. There can therefore be nothing in it which is literally *pure* or literally *itself*. We can truly say that everything determines everything else. A thing appears to have a certain nature in a certain relation. It behaves in a particular way in one particular relation, and in a different way in a different relation. We cannot possibly know what it is *in itself*. Perhaps, for all we know, it is nothing in itself; for it is always in a state of transition. When we catch it at *A*, it has already moved to *B*. How can it be anything in itself or have a nature of its own? If we can talk of its purity, it is the purity of non-being which rejects being in all its forms and cannot be mixed up with it.

The universe is a changing universe. Everything in it is mixed up with everything else. The Self is the only reality that is opposed to it in this respect. The Self does not change. It has a uniform nature. It does not mix. It stands aloof from everything, and illumines everything. If it is related, it is never *really* or *internally* related and is not therefore affected by its relations. It is literally and absolutely pure.

The Self, we have said, is pure intelligence. But does not pure intelligence know? And if it knows, how can it remain pure? It can only know when it is acted upon by things and

reacts to them intelligently. If things act upon it, they can be said to enter ino its very substance, and so determine it from within. Again, if it acts in order to know, it is determining itself differently in accordance with every fresh situation as it arises. The Self, it appears, cannot discharge its function in knowledge without being affected and without changing itself in the process. How can it retain its purity of nature?

Let us now suppose that the subject is affected in knowledge and it has also to act in order to know. But are we quite clear about the nature of this subject? Is it the real subject? We contend that it is not. It is necessary to draw a distinction. There is a real subject which is subject only and never an object, and there is a pseudo-subject which is subject first and object afterwards. The two are so mixed up together in our understanding that we find some difficulty in distinguishing and dissociating them. There is an 'I-form' which belongs to the mind. It changes as the acts of the mind change. It is relative to these acts and has no self-existence of its own. It is this 'I-form' or the ego-form that comes within the domain of change. It passes out; and in passing out, it is known as some kind of object. It belongs to the category of the not-Self. The real subject is the higher level subject which is of the nature of pure intelligence. It is not affected by anything that it is supposed to know. It is a pure light that reveals knowledge of things and equally reveals their prior ignorance. It is an actless awareness; for every act belongs to the lower domain of the mind, which is a domain of mere objects. Thus we find that the knowledge-relation does not affect the purity of the Self. The Self is the unaffected ground of all subject–object relations.

The Self is not only related to objects outside through knowledge. Perhaps more important than this relation is its relation to the body. This relation to the body is very intimate indeed. Neither the body nor the Self functions apart from the other. Can we deny that here at least matter and spirit come together and enter into a real relation?

This argument seems to suggest that there is such a thing as a soul in the body. The soul is supposed to be some kind of mysterious entity which functions intelligently in and through the body. We do not indeed *know* the soul. It is a hypothesis. But it is a legitimate hypothesis. For intelligent activities require something different from the body to which they can be referred. If this argument is correct, we no doubt make a distinction between intelligent substance and unintelligent substance or between matter and spirit. But spirit is still conceived on the analogy of material objects. The soul in the body is like a thing enclosed in a box. It is a materialistic view of the spirit. We cannot accept it. We replace the notion of the soul by the notion of the Self. The Self is not a hypothetical entity. It is intelligent and self-revealing for what it is. We can directly intuit it. We can also know the relation of the body to it by analysing the relevant experience.

The body may appear to enter, to a thoughtless man, into the intuition of the Self. It may appear to him to be somehow part of his very Self. But even he will make a distinction between the body which he calls *his* and the Self which owns the body. The body is *mine*, it is not *me*. A discriminating person easily distinguishes the two. There is something in us that is par excellence the 'I' or the Self. The body can form no part of it. It is essentially the *not-I*. The body changes every moment of our lives. The eye gets diseased or blind, the ear becomes deaf, every part of the body gets old and incapacitated. The Self never becomes diseased or incapacitated. It is the immovable witness of all changes of the body. There can be no real relation between the two. The sense of identity of the Self with the body can only be explained as the result of error and thoughtlessness. We all normally suffer from this error.

Let us take an example. I see *with* the eye. The eye is naturally distinct from the seer who sees with it; and yet in actual seeing, the sense of instrumentality is absent. The eye does not fall apart from seeing, and cannot be distinguished from it. It is in such complete identity with see-

ing that we say that the eye sees, that the eye functions intelligently. This is nothing but an erroneous way of speaking. The eye does not see, the eye is not intelligent. The eye is only erroneously identified with intelligence. There is in this way mutual super-imposition between the intelligent Self and the unintelligent body, so that the qualities of the body are referred to the Self and the Self becomes the seer; and contrariwise, the qualities of the Self are referred to the body which becomes endowed with intelligence. This is the fundamental error of our empirical existence.

The relation of false identity with the body leaves the Self pure and unaffected. A false relation cannot touch the being of that which is the ground of the relation. The Self is not therefore affected by the body. But we cannot say the same about the body. What is the body without the relation? It will have no character of being *mine* or being *intelligent*. It will be part of the external world only. It is therefore truer to say that the body is contained in the Self rather than that the Self is contained in the body. The Self is not truly conceived, if it is conceived materialistically. It is the ultimate spiritual ground of all material existence.

The Self appears mixed up not only with the body, but also with the mind. As a matter of fact, the mind appears to be the only intelligent reality there is. It is our very self. But here too we can truly say that the mind is *mine*. Anything that I can claim as *mine* is object to me. It cannot be my true Self. The mind is after all a series of states which I know. Its intelligence is a borrowed intelligence. It is the intelligence of the underlying ground, which is the Self. The Self reveals the changes of the mind as well as the lapses of the mind. The mind is in a relation of false identity with it, and cannot therefore affect it in any way.

We conclude that the Self is essentially pure, unrelated and incorruptible. Its nature is that of pure intelligence. But this intelligence does not mix in any way with the unintelligent in the form of the objects of the external world or the body or the mind. It stands behind them as their immutable ground and the informing spirit.

CHAPTER XX

DIVISIBILITY AND DIMENSIONS OF THE SELF

Space is great and time is great. There appears to be nothing greater than space and time. Everything seems to be contained in them. They are not contained in anything else. We propose to show that space and time are themselves contained in something greater.

What is contained in space and in time is also divisible in those dimensions. We can say that it occupies so much time or so much space. We can never literally reach the limit of divisibility in space and in time. We can have the conception of an instantaneous event or a point-event. But like the spatial point, which is supposed to be dimensionless, the point-event too is merely a matter of conception or of formal definition. It is not, and cannot be, an objective reality. It is an idea only. There is nothing in space or in time which is literally simple and further indivisible. Similarly, there is nothing in space and in time which is great in an absolute sense. We can always conceive a greater. Both the higher and the lower limits are ideal in character. They are limiting concepts only. Reality occupies the middle position of having a certain spatio-temporal dimension.

Space and time may be regarded as objective realities. There may be such entities as physical space and physical time. We do not need to have to argue against them. But we also cannot help going beyond them. Physical space may be, as the scientists say, finite, but without boundaries. Once however something is conceived as finite, thought cannot stop with it. It is bound to go beyond it and place the finite in a larger whole. Thought always tends to go from the finite to the infinite. But it cannot find the infinite in the objective world. Accordingly, it only succeeds in constructing larger and larger wholes. The infinite for thought

is never a finished product. It is always in the making. It is never made. It is another word for the indefinite.

Space and time, as objective realities, appear to have no limits. There can be nothing greater than they. But are they objectively real? Something is objectively real when it is a finished product. Space and time are not finished products. A finished product can only appear to thought as being *in* space and *in* time. Space and time therefore do not exist objectively. They are not themselves in another space and in another time. They may well be understood in this sense as being forms of thought for placing what is known objectively. If this argument is carried to its logical conclusion, nothing that is conceived objectively can be the last word in greatness. Thought can always go beyond it and construct greater wholes. There is neither the upper limit in greatness, nor the lower limit in simplicity, indivisibility and smallness. "Great" and "small" become relative terms only.

The Self stands contrasted to all spatio-temporal existence. It has no extensive parts. It has neither quantity nor dimension. It is literally simple and indivisible. It is in this sense the smallest thing there can be.

The Self is not only without quantity or external parts, but it is also without quality or internal parts. Something has a quality when it is presentable as an object or presentable sensibly. We can then describe it as being such and such. The Self cannot be so presented. It is never known from outside or descriptively. It is only known from inside and as a whole. It is only known through a self-revelation of its inmost being, and therefore known in its wholeness and completeness as an indivisible reality. What can be smaller than this differenceless reality, the veritable limit of all divisibility in all possible dimensions, both quantitative and qualitative?

This is, however, only one aspect of the dimensions of the Self. There is also the other aspect. Something that has

no quality and no quantity cannot be particularised, and it cannot be distinguished from pure being. We cannot say that it is here and *not there,* or it is this and *not that.* As pure being or as pure substance, it enters into all things and underlies all things. All things that are in space and in time, all things that are qualified or related, all things that exist anywhere or in any sense, are grounded in the Self. It is the universal ground of all specific forms of being. The being of the Self is thus as pervasive and as universal as the entire physico-mental universe. More than that. It is infinitely greater than that universe. For, between the finite and the infinite, between a dimension however great and dimensionless being that includes all particular being, there can be no comparison. The difference between them is itself of the order of the infinite. The universe of the Self is infinitely greater than the physico-mental universe known to us. If the Self is thus smaller than the smallest, it is also at the same time greater than the greatest (*aṇovaṇīyān-mahato-mahīyān*). Or as it is sometimes picturesquely put, one foot of the great Self or Brahman comprehends the entire universe dominated by māyā, while the remaining three feet remain outside of it and are untouched by any relationship with māyā.

It may now be argued that a *real self* cannot be wholly without qualities, and it cannot be without history. If it has no other qualities, it must at least have the quality of self-hood; and it must pass through certain experiences in time which constitute its history. If the self has no quality whatsoever and no dimension, it is as good as nothing. We may call it pure being. But pure being without any content and without any filling is indistinguishable from non-being. We must therefore distinguish the self from non-being and regard it as a reality having some quality or other and also a dimension. A real self cannot be absolutely simple and undifferentiated. It has the quality of self-hood and it is divisible in the dimension of time.

This view is not tenable. It is only when we are unable to know a thing from within or as it is in itself that we seek

to know it through some of its supposed qualities and so descriptively. The self is no such entity. We have no need to contemplate it from without as something given. The moment we try to do so, we are conscious of the error of our approach. The real self is never given to us and it cannot be known in the objective attitude. It is clearly to be distinguished from all objects. And there is no need to know it as object. For, of all other things it alone reveals itself to us for what it is in itself. We may thus be said to know it from within. We know it as a reality that is without an inside and an outside. We know it as a whole or in its entirety, or we do not know it at all. It is never possible to know it in part only or to know some aspect of it. It is known as the absolutely simple subject.

The so-called quality of self-hood has nothing in common with those other conceptual qualities which help to determine an unknown substance. Anything that can be conceptually determined is an object distinguishable from other objects. The self is no object of any kind. So far as the quality of self-hood is concerned, it is of little or no value for knowledge. If we do not know, to begin with, what a self is in itself, how can we know the quality of self-hood? It is a clear case of self-contradiction to seek to determine the self by the quality of self-hood. If we do not know the self without the quality, the quality itself is a problem for us. The quality of self-hood is certainly not a sensible quality which we can know prior to the substance determined through it and hidden behind it.

So far as the dimension of time is concerned, it is only a way of saying that the self is in time. If the self is really self-identical in the different moments of its so-called life, it is not in time at all. It is really out of time. The identity of the self is fundamental, the changes which make up the content of history are superficial, objective and only falsely attributed to the self. The self can never consciously identify itself with the content of history and say, at any moment of time, "I am this thought or act or feeling, etc". When we

say that they are *ours,* we certainly distinguish the self from them, and we claim only to have a certain relationship with them, the relation of ownership. The owner is not the same thing as that which he owns.

We conclude that the self has no quality and no dimension. The infinitely small coincides with the infinitely great in the Self. What is as nothing is also the whole thing. There are small things and great things when things have some dimension. But when dimension is eliminated, what is left is neither small nor great, or it is both simultaneously. The smallest dimensionless thing is the zero. The greatest dimensionless thing is the infinite. Since both the zero and the infinite have no dimension, we cannot say the one from the other. They coincide. The zero is the infinite, and vice-versa. The Self is the only reality that can claim both these epithets with equal truth.

CHAPTER XXI

BEYOND ALL RELATIONS

Everything is what it is through its relations to other things. We might almost say that relations are constitutive of a thing. Take away all relations of a thing and the thing collapses. Some go so far as to say that relations are the ultimate truth. There is no such thing as a *thing* or a *substance* that stands *in relation.* But this is clearly an extreme view. Relations must relate; and what they relate must in some sense be substantival.

That has naturally led some philosophers to the other extreme. They argue that before a thing is related, it must be something. It must exist prior to its relations. These can only be its accidents. A thing exists *and* has relations. Evidently, if this argument is true, it makes no difference to a thing to have any relations. The thing is as good as unrelated. The thing continues to be the same after its relations as it was before them. The relations may be said to fall outside the thing. They are external relations.

Let us suppose that all relations of a thing are of this type. That gives rise to a problem. If *A* is something in itself, and *B* too is something in itself, what is the meaning of there being a relation between *A* and *B*? Neither *A* nor *B* will be touched by the relation and so become aware of it. The relation may be said to fall between *A* and *B*. It will be a third term called *C*. The relation thus does not really relate. It is a new term requiring in its turn to be related. The process becomes endless without achieving the original purpose of relating *A* and *B*.

Perhaps the best way of understanding a relation of this sort is to say that *A* and *B* are related by a mind, and that the relation between them is a purely mental affair. *A* is

to the left of *B*, *A* comes after *B*, etc., appear to be relations of this type. A mind relates *A* and *B* in a particular way, and the relation has meaning only in the mind's act of relating. This act brings *A* and *B* together in thought, refers one to the other, and conceives a relation between them. Take away this mutual reference of *A* and *B* by the mind, and the relation collapses. Such relations are evidently subjective, although they appear objective and are so spoken. But for the subject's act of relating, these relations would not appear, and we could not significantly speak of them.

To get at truly objective relations, the relations must affect the things they relate. They must make a difference to them. But then other problems arise. To make a difference to things, things must be there in order to be made differently. What then are things before such relations? Are they anything at all? If they are something, they are literally something *in themselves* and essentially *unrelated*. This means that the unrelated enters into a relation, or sustains a relation. But if that is so, the relation can only be external to it or superimposed upon it. The truth is that the unrelated *thing-in-itself* cannot put forth an act or even receive an action from what is presumably external to its substance. Action and reaction are only possible between things which are mutually interdependent or things which are internally related. But then the very concept of objective relations is in the melting pot; for there is nothing left that can be said to be prior to the relation or to sustain the relation. If there is nothing of the kind, there is nothing to relate. Relations cannot hang in mid air without resting on reality. To say that relations constitute the things they relate is really to talk non-sense. Relations presuppose some kind of independent reality and are grounded in it. At least one term of the relation must have this independent status.

However that be, what we cannot help noting is that related being is not being in itself, and it is the latter that deserves to be called absolute reality. Absolute reality must be causally independent of everything else. It cannot be

born or brought into being. Not only that. It must have a nature which is not determined by reference to anything else. The things that we know are dependent in both these ways. They are causally related, and they are also related in their own nature. Nothing appears to have a nature of its own, without reference to what goes beyond it. But if that is so, negation of a thing enters into the very nature of the thing. Nothing appears to be purely positive or purely itself.

It might here be said that a thing must have a positive nature before it can have a reference beyond itself. Something must be apprehended as blue before it can be understood to refer to what is not-blue. The reference to not-blue is only a consequence of the original apprehension. We cannot therefore deny a positive nature to objects of our knowledge.

This view is not correct; for all determinations pertaining to the nature of a thing involve this reference and so the relativity. To determine a thing is to draw a line between the character which the thing is supposed to possess and the character which is opposed to it. The latter therefore enters as a necessary factor in the knowledge of the former. We cannot determine a thing without distinguishing it from its opposite. Negation is thus part of its meaning. There is no character which is purely positive. Every character is relative. It refers beyond itself. This is sometimes expressed by saying that every affirmation leads to its negation and every thesis to its antithesis.

As against the relativity of all things which constitute our world, there stands the unrelated Self. The Self is without any character that can bring relativity to it. It is not such and such. It cannot be described. It is truly indescribable. Again, the Self cannot be distinguished from anything. Distinction is the most fundamental relation. Where distinction cannot be achieved, no other relation is possible. To be distinct is to be an object of a kind, and so necessarily finite and limited. The Self is no object. The only relation there-

fore that the Self can bear to anything whatsoever is to be non-distinct from it, or in other words to have the relation of identity with it. The relation of identity is either no relation at all, or it is the relation of *false identity*. If the identity is real, there are no two terms and no relation. But if there are two terms and we have reason to distinguish them, the relation of identity can only be false. We find this relation of false identity in all cases of illusory appearances. The illusory is falsely identified with the ground.

The Self is non-distinct from all things and is the ground of all things. It is the ground, because it is that pure intelligence which apprehends all things, and so gives them meaning and reality. Again, if things are necessarily related in their nature, there must be a mutual reference of things. This mutual reference is only possible in the unity of consciousness. This consciousness cannot be itself related. It is the most pervasive reality. It excludes nothing and is distinguishable from nothing. If it is excluded, the term or terms excluding it will cease to appear and will cease to have any meaning. More than that. If consciousness is itself a term in a distinction, the latter will require a ground which is inclusive of the terms. But what can this ground be except consciousness again? In other words, consciousness as such cannot be distinguished. It is the most pervasive reality. 'Self' is only another name for it. The Self is in this way the ground of all relations and is not itself related.

The most general relation in which the Self enters with anything whatsoever is the relation signified by the term "mine". All things that I ever know are in a sense "mine"; for they are part of those experiences which are *my* experiences. There is nothing in the wide world which cannot be thus related to me. We have already seen that all ownership is the result of a false identification. The Self has no parts; and yet I take what is not my Self as part of my Self. Things become "mine" through error. This error is in the first instance an intellectual error,—things are part of my perception, and perception is part of me. But in special cases,

it is also an ethical error. In addition to the error of false identification at the perceptual level, there is also the error of false identification at the moral level. We have a false sense of possession. We establish, through an act of the will, our ownership over things which in reality belong as little to me as they do to everybody else who perceives them.

As a result of the false identification of the Self with the body, and through the body to the rest of the world, the Self assumes the fictitious form of the enjoyer-self or *jīva* who both acts and suffers. The *Jīva* is engrossed in the world and is in a sense part of it. But behind it stands the unrelated Self, also called *sākṣin*. The *sākṣin* does nothing, is related to nothing, and suffers nothing. It is truly beyond all relations. It is a pure awareness that reveals everything. And so we have the allegory of a tree, on which sit two birds. The one pecks at the fruits, sweet or bitter, and as a consequence suffers or enjoys. The other merely looks on at this scene, unaffected and dispassionate. We have the same two birds sitting simultaneously on the tree of our life. Our life in the body is attached to things of the world; and it is accordingly the life of pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow. But there is a life above this life. It is the life of the pure spirit. The pure spirit is not attached to anything and it is not affected by anything. It ever remains the same, ever full of the infinite joy of its own being. It is the Life Eternal.

PART III

MĀYĀ

(Transcendental Cosmology)



CHAPTER XXII

REALITY AND EXPERIENCE

Reality may be anything. We have no apriori reasons why it should have a particular character only, and not some other. Whatever the character of reality, we are entirely dependent upon experience for knowing that character. If reality did not form part of our experience, we should have no problem about reality. But if it does form part of our experience, and if our experience has a necessary reference to it, we are philosophically obligated to determine its own nature and to know reality for what it is. The task is made easy. Because we have to search within the four walls of our experience in order to decide what deserves to be called reality.

How are we to do this? Can reason help us in any way? We think that the function of reason is philosophically most important, and it is second only to that of experience. All the same, reason has certain necessary limitations. It cannot prescribe any rule for reality itself. It can only prescribe rules for thought. Thought must observe those rules in order to be rational thought. They are naturally formal rules. Reality has no need to be formally rational. It is in this sense beyond reason and prescribes a rule to reason. Reason is in a way subordinate to reality, not the other way about. Reality is subordinate to nothing. It is pre-eminent. It is not for reason to take a decision in the matter. Reason must follow, not lead.

We said that reason has an important part to play in the philosophical venture. What is that part? It alone can analyse experience, elucidate its meaning and enable us to find what we want. Our experience as it is, is open to several different interpretations. We want an interpretation which will do justice to the whole range of our experience

and give a self-consistent meaning to it. What reason cannot do is to impose a preconceived scheme of concepts upon reality or to dictate to reality what it should or should not be.

It is important to note in this connection that reason by itself is not intuitive, and there is no such thing as a purely rational experience of reality which has a special claim to truth. Reason can analyse, criticise, co-ordinate and elucidate. All this implies a prior revelation of reality through some other method. Reason has to accept reality as thus revealed without imposing its own laws upon it. If reality, for instance, takes on opposite characters equally well, reason must recognise the fact and pronounce reality to be so far super-rational. If reality rejects both the opposite characters equally well, it must pronounce it to be indescribable and inexplicable in those terms. There is no sense then in saying that reality is, or should be, rational. There is nothing to prevent reality from being super-rational, or even in certain cases irrational.

It is sometimes argued that rational experience is quite possible in one special sense. There are certain ideas which inform all our experience of reality, which are intrinsic to reason, and which are not derived from experience. These ideas indicate a higher level of experience called rational experience. When reason becomes self-conscious and reflects upon itself, it can know these ideas in their pure rational essence. This is the higher intelligible reality, the reality of ideas. There is thus a rational knowledge of reality to be contrasted with knowledge through sense-experience. The former constitutes the higher metaphysical knowledge.

Now it appears to us that there may be grades or levels of experience, and certain ideas of reason may be more appropriate to higher grades than to lower grades. But there is no such thing among these grades which may properly be called rational experience in the sense mentioned above. The ideas of reason do not claim to be more than mere ideas. They do not themselves constitute reality. They can only

refer to reality and make it intelligible in terms of thought. If, for instance, we use the term 'self' or 'spirit', we must be able to point to something in experience which deserves to be so designated or described. Our ideas must find their meaning and their validity in experience. They do not constitute a separate realm of reality transcending all known intuitive contacts with it. We can criticise our ideas, we cannot criticise reality.

Our knowledge of reality begins with a species of direct awareness which we may call by the general name of "intuition". This intuition may not be of one simple and easily obtainable kind. It may not be all sensible. We might also have an intuition of what is in itself super-sensible. Reason must take note of all forms of primary intuition that we can detect on reflection. Having taken note, we must proceed to interpret them and thus make our experience self-consistent.

Intuition of reality at any level whatsoever may be said to reveal reality at that level. Reason cannot change this intuition or add anything to it. It can only interpret it, bring out its real significance and recognise the element of undoubted truth in it. It can do this when it is confronted by a question. It is confronted by a question, when there are already contrary interpretations or contrary opinions. The rational demand of consistency is thus challenged. Reason seeks to meet this challenge. It cannot meet it arbitrarily or out of its own resources, i.e. by coining a new opinion, which might also be challenged. The so-called synthesis of reason, suggested by Hegel, is therefore of doubtful value. It becomes a new thesis which can be contradicted. The only right way for it to meet the challenge will be to show the self-contradictory character of each opinion, or alternatively to point to the element of self-evidence in the original intuition and the falsity of all our interpretations of it. The upper limit to all our interpretations and all our criticisms is necessarily the self-evident truth. It is a kind of super-reason. It is beyond question.

When reason recognises it, reason becomes a species of direct seeing. It ceases to be a ratiocinative process and ceases to be speculative.

It is here that we get a legitimate meaning for what may be called a rational intuition. Some philosophers speak of an intellectual intuition. But clearly this intellectual intuition is not primary. It is not normal, natural and universal. It is something to be achieved through an intellectual effort. It is an effort to apprehend intellectually what is itself beyond the intellect. Ordinarily our intellect mediates our knowledge of things obtained through the senses. When the intellect becomes intuitive, it dispenses with the use of concepts. It does not inform reality, but it is in its turn informed by reality. Or what is the same thing, reality impresses its own form upon the intellect by revealing itself to the intellect and leaving no scope to the latter for any interpretative activity with its accompaniment of doubt and error. The highest form of knowledge may be said to be an intellectual intuition in this sense.

We said that reason has to take note of certain original forms of intuition, and that these were not all sensible. There are two principal forms of intuition,—the sensible intuition of 'this' and the non-sensible intuition of 'I'. There is no third variety, which can either combine these two or reject both of them. They are so exclusive and opposed to each other that they cannot be brought together in a higher and more inclusive form of reality. Nothing can be both 'this' and 'I'. They also cannot exist side by side as two reals. That poses a problem for reason: can there be any opposition within reality itself? Shall we not say that the two forms of reality can exist side by side and may even be inter-related?

This is how some western philosophers might look at the problem. They draw the line between matter and mind. The two forms of reality are supposed to be entirely different and characteristically opposed. Still they constitute two different domains existing side by side and somehow related. There is no challenge of the one to the reality of the other.

May be, there is a common neutral stuff of which they are two different forms in the process of evolution. May be, the materialists are right when they regard matter as the only real substance, and the mind as an epiphenomenon of certain material collocations. May be, the idealists and the mentalists are right when they reduce material phenomena to ideas in the mind. All this speculation arises from the need for a unitary substance as the basis for all the different forms of reality. The need may be fictitious and so also the speculation that seeks to satisfy it. What cannot be denied is that matter and mind appear to co-exist and also to interact. The nature of the interaction may not be comprehensible to us and may pose a problem, but the fact of the interaction cannot be doubted. Once we accept two different substances existing in their own right, any interaction between them poses no rational problem. It seems quite natural and even inevitable.

Our problem is quite different. We think that the division of matter and mind into two metaphysically ultimate substances is not sound. If by matter we understand a set of phenomena which we sensibly know, by mind we understand another set of phenomena which we do not sensibly know, but know through a kind of internal perception. All speculation about the nature of the substances behind them is profitless, for there is nothing in our experience itself to go by. Both physical phenomena and mental phenomena are to us phenomena only, and so they are correctly indicated by the category of "thisness" or objectivity. The only other category metaphysically opposed to it is the category of Selfhood. The Self stands for no kind of phenomena. The Self and the not-Self are thus the only two ultimate metaphysical categories. All other demarcations and divisions of reality have no metaphysical value, and are based only upon convenient groupings of phenomena for objective or scientific study. The distinction of all reality into the Self and the not-Self is also metaphysically significant. For it naturally and inevitably gives rise to the problem of the unity of substance. For one thing, the two forms of reality are so op-

posed to each other that each constitutes a challenge to the reality of the other in its own being. They just cannot stay real side by side without losing their distinctive form and their basic opposition. For another, we have in this dualism phenomena without any substance on the one hand, and a substance without any phenomenal appearance on the other. If we are in search of the unity of substance, the process is simplified.

How shall we proceed to solve the problem posed by two diametrically opposed forms of reality? The principle which shall guide us in this decison may be stated as follows: If the reality of *A* implies the reality of *B,* but the reality of *B* does not imply the reality of *A,* then *B* is the ground of *A,* and it is the ultimate reality. The ground is the reality, the gound-ed is only an appearance. Where however neither implies the other, both are equally real and equally independent.

It appears to us that there is nothing which is unrelated to intelligence. The world at large or the sensible reality has the essential character of being *given* to the Self or being *affirmed.* The very notion of an independent material rea-lity is only obtained through abstraction from experience. This proves that the reality of the not-Self is not *in-itself;* it is dependent upon the Self. How can we deny the latter and accept the former as reality?

This argument is not reversible. The reality of the Self is in no way dependent upon the not-Self. The self known as necessarily related to the object is not the real self. It is the object-self or the apparent self. The real self is always in the background, always a knower, never the known. Although it is not known, it is not the unknown and the un-knowable like the problematic thing-in-itself. It reveals all things and reveals itself as not to be known objectively. The Self is no problem for knowledge. It is self-evidently true; and although we cannot be said to know it as we know objects, we certainly speak of it meaningfully as immediate.

We determine the nature of reality on the basis of our experience. An analysis of this experience reduces all

objects of knowledge to the status of appearance. The only reality behind the appearance is not a problematic thing-in-itself, but the Self—transcendental and self-revealing. This Self is not a logical entity implied by all knowledge, like Kant's *unity of apperception.* It is not a metaphysical entity like the *Pure Ego,* which posits a world and expresses itself in it. It is a pure transcendental Spirit, which only reveals, and in revealing all things constitutes their only ultimate spiritual ground. We cannot fail to recognise the Self in any complete analysis of experience; and we also cannot fail to recognise the impossibility of going beyond the Self to a more ultimate principle of reality.

CHAPTER XXIII

RELATION OF FALSE IDENTITY

We have seen that the Self and the not-Self are always found in relation in our experience. We never find them apart. The question naturally arises, what is the nature of their relation?

Our analysis of experience has shown that the Self and the not-Self are absolutely opposed to each other in their nature. How can two such entities be really related? Our contention is that they are not really related. They are only mutually confused or falsely identified. All our life is based upon this false identification or *adhyās*. We act with the body and think with the mind. The body and the mind are so to say absorbed in the substance of the Self. The very instruments of knowledge or *pramāṇās* become operative as the result of this mutual confusion. This error of our thought and life cannot be rationally explained. It is an ultimate irrationality which has to be recognised. The moment however we recognise it, we begin to be free from its bondage. It is the source of all our ills. We take the ills of the body and the mind to be *our* ills. Discriminating thought ought to dispel the illusion.

The relation of false identity is different from all other relations. All other relations, let us say, are relations between two real entities. A relation between two real entities has problems of its own. Can two real entities be really related? On the one hand we find that only two *real entities* can be *really related;* on the other hand we find that it is impossible to get them *related.* A real entity can only have an external relation. An external relation does not in the least affect the entities it is supposed to relate. It falls *between* them like a third term, which in its turn needs to be related. Thus the original relation cannot be achieved. The

whole problem may be summed up in the question, how can that which is in itself unrelated be *really* related?

We shall have therefore to say, in order to justify real relations, that there is nothing which is in itself unrelated. This means that there is nothing that is not a product of some relation or other. Relation then is primary and the terms secondary. But how is this possible? A real relation implies a real entity behind it. We can picture a real entity acting upon some other real entity. The relation between them will be a real relation. But this relation presupposes two real entities in interaction. The relation is not in a vacuum. It is based upon two real entities which are prior to it and which constitute its ground. It is the relation which is the product of the terms, not vice-versa.

Let us then suppose that there are two real entities, and there is also a real relation between them. This relation is not a third term, but a dynamic relation between the two entities. We express this by saying that one entity *acts,* and the other is *acted upon.* But if we analyse this action and reaction, we are led to amazing results, taking us straight to the relation of false identity. Perhaps the relation of false identity is the only real relation; or better still, it is the only intelligible relation or a relation that dissolves itself and does not give rise to any further problems. It is a false relation which can be traced entirely to an error of perception. What problem can we make about a product of error?

We say that one real thing acts upon another real thing and changes that thing. Let us study both the ends of the relation. When can something be said to act? A thing that is just determined from the outside cannot be said to act. It can only be the medium of communication of an action which arises elsewhere. In order that a thing should be able to act, it must have a *self-being* or independent being, and it should be *free* to initiate the act. There is no other sense of being an actor. An actor is always an intelligent being endowed with a will. He may act or he may not act, as he chooses.

In either case, he remains unchanged. All change thus necessarily leads us to the unchanging as its sole origin. Nothing can change *of itself*. Change leads us to a cause beyond itself. The only ultimate and real cause of change is the changeless.

This gives rise to a problem. If the changeless alone acts, has it not itself changed in the process? If it itself has not changed, it has not really acted. But equally if it has changed, is it the real actor? Here is clearly a paradox. A way out is found only by postulating the relation of false identity. An act or occurrence takes place in the mind through causes which are also in the mind. The mind is not an actor in its own right. It becomes an actor when an act is falsely identified with the intelligent and the immutable self beyond it. The real actor, the source of intelligence and freedom, is beyond the mind. This Self beyond the mind really does nothing. It does not act. It passes for an actor, because it is falsely identified with the occurrences in the mind. An act becomes *free* through this relationship. It also becomes *my* act. But all this does not change the Self. The Self is in this sense the unmoving mover. It does nothing, but still it is the only actor. The relation of false identity explains this possibility and removes the paradox.

Let us now take the other end of the relation we are analysing. Here we have the thing acted upon which is also a real entity. The question we want to raise is, how is a thing acted upon? How does it *receive* an influence? We are naturally inclined to suppose that the influence is of the nature of a physical or mechanical push which disarranges the parts of the thing influenced. But then we have still to explain how the parts move out of their places. Can they move out of their places unless they are internally affected? Mechanical action cannot be carried right to the end. At the end there must be such a thing as *the reception* of the influence. This reception, if it is not to be mechanical again (which explains nothing), must be an intelligent reception. It must be based on the analogy of how I receive an influence. It

is always a case of intelligent receiving or apprehending or taking note. What is thus received is absorbed in one's own being, not really, but through the relation of false identification. The individuality and the self-identity of the Self is not disrupted in the process thereby. And at the same time we can understand how the Self can have varying internal states in accordance with the influences received by it.

It is true that we often appear to ourselves to have changed through the influences received by us. But this is only an error of perception. We apprehend the so-called changes. We are therefore distinct from the changes. Let us take an instance. I apprehend the stinging pain caused by a scorpion. There is an internal state of pain. But I am not the pain which I am able to apprehend. What about the apprehension? I cannot be the apprehension either which I can know objectively as *my* apprehension. So the pain is *mine* and the apprehension too is *mine*,—all through a certain false identification of the Self with these passing states of the body and the mind. We conclude that a real internal relation between two real entities leads us straight to the relation of false identity, which is not a real relation, but a product of error.

We have so far considered the best known of real relations, namely interaction between things. The question may be raised, what sort of relation is the knowledge-relation? It is evident that the object of knowledge should not be in any way affected or changed or distorted by knowledge. It should be merely revealed by knowledge for what it really is. This means that the knowledge-relation should fall outside the object. It should be an external relation. But then how is knowledge possible under the circumstances? The object remains in its place, and the knowledge arises in a different place, say the mind of the percipient. There is no contact between the thing and the consciousness of the latter. Kant tried to bring them together in his account of knowledge. The thing influenced the mind through sensation. But then what we apprehend is the sensible content

which is internal to sensible experience, not the thing. In other words, through the processes of sensation, imagination and understanding, reality or the thing-in-itself is reconstituted mentally. It is this mental construction that we really know, and it is clearly internal to knowledge. Here then is a new paradox. If the relation is kept *external*, there is no *possibility of knowledge*. If the relation is made internal to knowledge, there is no *true knowledge*. Reality cannot be known either way.

If this analysis of knowledge is accepted, we have the same relation of false identity over again. The object which we know is a subject-created appearance of reality. Reality remains unaffected by the appearance. The appearance however has the relation of false identity with reality; and so it is mistakenly taken for reality. Or what is the same thing, reality is taken to be what it is not, namely, its appearance to us. The internal relation of knowledge takes us straight to the relation of false identity.

Every object that is known is so related to the underlying reality. May be, however, that there is no such reality, no thing out there that really confronts the Self. We have no evidence of any such reality. We know the object; and this object is internal to knowledge. In that case, we are led on to *pure awareness* as the ground of this knowledge. All things known demand pure awareness as the ground of their being and their meaning to us, pure awareness demands nothing beside itself. Once again, the only relation between objects of knowledge and pure awareness is that of false identity. Objects appear, because they are falsely identified with pure awareness. The relation is internal to the objects, but external to pure awareness which is unaffected by the relation. The relation is neither purely internal nor purely external.

The relation of false identity is not a real relation, because it does not subsist between two real entities. It subsists between a real entity and one that is only a product of the relation; in other words, between a real entity and an illusory

one. This relation poses no further problem, because it is not a real objective relation. We can always trace it to erroneous perception. The subject identifies what is imaginary with what is real and exists in itself. It does this through some defect. In the end, this defect will be found to be ignorance of reality. If we could dispel ignorance through right knowledge, erroneous perception would be rendered impossible. There is such a thing as transcendental ignorance or ignorance of ultimate metaphysical reality which alone can account for the appearance of a world to us.

CHAPTER XXIV

IMPLICATIONS OF A PHILOSOPHY OF NON-DUALISM

A philosophy of non-dualism is really a contradiction in terms. If there is no dualism, there is nothing to be explained. Dualism alone can set us a problem of explanation. In order that we should be able to philosophise, we must have a problem. The problem is whether the pluralism of common experience is ultimate or whether it can be reduced to a higher unity which explains it. In the former case, we have no philosophical problem. Everything is as it is or as it appears to us to be. All we have to do is to study the relations of things, as science does. There is no distinction between appearance and reality, and there is no ultimate unity which explains differences of appearance to us. Science completely replaces philosophy and it is the only true wisdom. In the latter case, we do get a philosophical problem. Plurality of things is to be explained by unity, and dualism by non-dualism. Advaita Vedanta seeks to give this sort of explanation. If the explanation succeeds, dualism will be reduced to a mere appearance, illusory in character. Thus a philosophy of non-dualism easily becomes a philosophy of Illusionism or *māyā-vāda*. It explains by explaining away its starting point as a product of error, and replacing it by a higher standpoint or the stand-point of non-dualistic truth. The whole philosophical endeavour becomes an endeavour to get away from an untruth.

Non-duality is the very opposite of duality. If, for instance, non-duality is the ultimate truth, it can be that only on condition that the duality with which we start is an illusory appearance. Thus the very truth of non-dualism *entails* the illusoriness of a world that is full of differences of all kinds; in other words, a non-dualistic philosophy has neces-

sarily to adopt the principle of illusoriness as the only principle of explanation for the known differences.

It is open to us to accept the truth of non-dualism or not. Many philosophers find it difficult to accept it. They like to keep to experience as it is, and at the same time to explain the facts of experience by a higher unity. They want to explain, and not explain away. Since there can be no logical explanation of non-logical entities, such as facts, the only other possibility left to us is to explain facts as illustrations of a comprehensive generalisation as in science. But here there is a difficulty. An all-embacing generalisation, which might satisfy philosophy, is scientifically unattainable. Philosophy cannot be turned into science, which starts with limited problems and attempts limited solutions. Philosophers have therefore attempted a world-view, which is indeed not scientifically verifiable, but which satisfies their own rational requirements. The Idealistic view that Ultimate Reality is free from contradiction and all-inclusive is one such attempt. No fact of experience is rejected or repudiated altogether. Every fact is accounted for. It is supposed to get its true meaning and value in the Whole. The philosophical recommendation is therefore made that the stand-point of the finite individual is to be replaced by that of the Whole. To contemplate everythng as part of the Whole and in the Whole is to contemplate it as it really is or as truth.

Now it appears to us that the postulation of an ultimate inclusive unity explains nothing. Facts are what they appear to be. If they are literally included in the unity, we do not explain them by the latter. We simply carry them bodily into the unity and leave them there in their raw state. They are just brute facts. The unity does nothing to them. As a matter of fact, the unity itself is fictitious. If however they cannot be so carried, and if they are transformed and transmuted in the unity, they become different facts. To explain our present facts, we put something else in their place in the reality. This amounts to saying that reality is of one sort, while its appearance to us is different. Do we then explain

the facts or explain them away? It is evident that the facts are not real in the form we know them; and this form is not explicable by anything in the reality. We have to transcend the form and annul it before we can get to the reality. The talk about transmutation of facts in the reality carries us nowhere. No one can determine the quantity and the quality of this transmutation. The difference between our present facts and the same facts in the reality can be almost infinite. If that is so, how is this view different from the more forth-right view of Advaita Vedanta that what we perceive as fact is only an illusory appearance of the Real with which it has nothing in common?

The philosophy of non-dualism explains plurality in the only way it can be explained,—the different facts of experience are not literally and bodily contained in the unity, but they are only *grounded* in it. The unity explains them, because it makes their appearance (and that is all they are) possible. The appearance is not part of the underlying reality or the ground. A part of reality will be quite as real as the whole. A constitutive element of a whole is, as a matter of fact, prior to the whole. It is also more real than the whole. It may be that in certain circumstances the whole adds a *value* to the part. But the two questions must be kept separate. Reality is not the same thing as value. We can say that value is made or created. We cannot say that reality is made or created. Reality is the basis of value. The Whole cannot therefore add to the *reality* of the part. It is just the other way. The Whole can be made and unmade by the parts. Ontology has nothing to gain by imposing teleology upon it.

An appearance then is in no sense a part of the underlying reality. It is however explained by the latter. It is explained in the sense that it is made possible by its relation to the latter. It has no being *in itself*. Its being is exhausted by its appearance; and this appearance is wholly dependent upon the ground in which it appears. The ground is thus the reality of the appearance.

Facts of common experience cannot be *logically explained;* no fact is logically contained in another fact, just as propositions are. Facts can only be *ontologically* explained. They are ontologically explained, when their dependence upon some other fact or facts is shown. If the latter belong to the same order of dependent being, they in turn need an explanation. This series can be carried on indefinitely without giving us a real and therefore a final explanation. The final explanation is only possible when we are able to show that the whole series depends upon something which itself is not dependent and which is therefore real in itself. The uncaused, the timeless and the eternal alone explains, if anything explains.

Advaita Vedanta has accordingly Brahman, the Eternal, as the ultimate cause and principle of explanation. But that does not suffice. It constitutes only one requirement of an explanation. To complete the explanation, something else is required too. There is a sense in which the Eternal explains nothing. The Eternal cannot act and cannot create. It can only *stay eternal.* If there cannot be a real creation on the part of the Eternal, there must be at least a make-believe creation. This is only possible through some other principle, which can explain the appearance of a creation without there being a real creation. This can be no other than the principle of error or of illusion. Error can account for the appearance of things which are really not there. These things are not really created or brought into being, but are only illusorily created. The non-eternal alone requires explanation; and it is completely explained when we say that it is grounded in the Eternal, and further that its appearance there is due to the power of error. Error creates only illusions, and these illusions require no further explanation.

We have thus for the explanation of the objects of experience, the Eternal Reality and the principle of error. The latter alone explains the appearance of that which does not really exist in something that does so exist. The peculiarity of this explanation is that no further problem of explanation

is left over. Error itself is not real or ultimate. It requires a ground or an intelligent being,—in this case pure intelligence or Brahman. It is not co-eternal with Brahman. It is dependent upon Brahman, and its relation to Brahman is one of false identity only. At the same time, there can be no further explanation of error. It is an ultimate irrationality. When we have said that something is due to error, the matter ends there. We cannot ask, why error? Error can be dissipated (and it demands to be dissipated), but it cannot be itself explained. There is no reason for it in the nature of things themselves. Whatever reasons we may give will not individually or collectively *account* for error. Error should not be, but is. Once however error is exposed through right knowledge, it ceases to be.

The non-eternal principle or the power of error is called *māyā* in Advaita Vedanta. Māyā has no independent status. It stays in Brahman, the Eternal, and achieves its results in and for Brahman. There is thus no challenge to non-dualism from the acceptance of *māyā*. On the contrary, the principle of *māyā* renders non-dualism intelligible and free from self-contradiction. It saves the non-duality of Brahman, while it gives the only possible explanation of a world of differences compatible with it. It is because the principle of *māyā* performs this dual purpose that it is of great *logical value* to a philosophy of non-dualism. Ontologically Brahman alone is real. But logically we cannot altogether ignore the world of appearance. The principle of *māyā* is therefore logically necessary. If Brahman alone is the Real, then what is not Brahman is all illusory or *māyic*.

CHAPTER XXV

A PHILOSOPHIC JUSTIFICATION OF *MĀYĀ-VĀDA*

The illusoriness of the world is repugnant to common-sense. No-one can live and act without taking the world to be real. It therefore seems to argue the insincerity of a person who says that the world is illusory and yet behaves in every respect like other men for whom it is very real. Advaitism however does recognise and make allowance for this practical situation. Every man who functions through a body cannot but take the world to be real for all practical purposes. His very life depends upon this belief. But this practical necessity cannot predetermine the theoretical issue, which can only be decided on the basis of some form of absolutely valid knowledge. Our present knowledge can be shown to be erroneous; and it may be so completely erroneous that truth may be wholly lost to us in it.

We do not want to suggest that the error of our knowledge is absolute. There is no such thing as absolutely erroneous knowledge. Error always hangs about a core of truth. We misperceive *something;* and this something is *present* in our perception together with the erroneous distortion that we add to it. What we perceive is a mixture of truth and error. Truth relates to what *is,* and error to what *we* give or super-impose upon what is. Where error is present therefore, truth also is present. In fact, truth peers at us through the erroneous appearance. It is never wholly hidden. Only we fail to recognise it.

It is perhaps easy to admit that some amount of error is quite possible in our common perceptions and in all scientific data; but this error can be corrected and gradually reduced through scientific checks and procedures. What will not be easily admitted is that there is error which cannot be empiri-

cally corrected; in other words, that there is such a thing as a transcendental illusion which cannot be dissipated through ordinary empirical or scientific methods. Indeed, it will be generally agreed, that there is inadequacy of knowledge. Perhaps also, that this inadequacy gives us a wrong picture of the truth. But then it will also be believed that whatever deviation there is from the truth will be gradually corrected by our growing knowledge. The process may be slow, but it can be made sure and definite. We need not bother about the goal, which is absolute truth. The faith should suffice that we are progressing, and that science is quite competent for all that genuine knowledge of reality that matters. There is no error that is wholly incorrigible by means of the ordinary scientific procedures.

This view appears plausible. But it makes a large supposition; and that supposition is that the scientific method is adequate for the purposes of truth and for detecting all errors. The deficiencies of the scientific method are well-known. The method of hypothesis can never give absolute truth. It might give probable truth or relative truth,—but that is a long way from real and genuine truth or knowledge of reality as it is in itself. Knowledge must coincide with reality in a direct awareness which leaves no room for doubt, error or modification. Such knowledge alone can be ultimately satisfactory and fulfil the ideal of knowledge. Philosophy is nothing except the pursuit of *the ideal.* In this respect, it transcends science which pursues knowledge that is not theoretically perfect, but which is practically and socially useful. Science proceeds with instruments of knowledge which are defective. It employs hypothesis, which is nothing but imagination. However far a hypothesis is verified, its hypothetical character is never lost or completely eliminated; and then verification itself is based upon sense-perception, which is itself an imperfect method of knowledge.

Let us examine sense-perception, which supplies to science its facts and also its method of verification in the end. It will be admitted that we do have perceptions which are

seemingly true and also perceptions which have been proved to be false. The latter again have been so proved on the basis of other perceptions which are regarded by us as true; so that in the end, some perceptions have to be taken as true. If no perceptions are taken to be true, there are no false perceptions either. So we end up with some perceptions which are not questioned. It would appear to be illogical therefore to suppose that all our perceptions are erroneous. If none are true, how do we prove the error of any of our perceptions whatsoever?

Having conceded all this, the mere admission of the possibility of erroneous perception is very damaging to the truth of perception as such. It is possible to argue that all perception is true perception and that there is no such thing as erroneous perception at all. It is possible also to argue that all perception is erroneous, since there is a fundamental likeness between a false perception and a so-called true one. It is not possible to argue that some perceptions are true and others erroneous on grounds other than those relating to their own internal evidence, of which there is none. If a perception can be false on the basis of the evidence supplied by another perception, what is to guarantee the truth of the latter? The so-called true perception is itself open to cancellation. Where will the process end? Is not the truth of every perception whatsoever suspect? A perception is true only *as long as* it is uncancelled. But truth is not dependent upon a time-factor. Truth is true *because* it is true, *not because* of the mere accident of being uncancelled for a length of time. A perception is therefore true if it can be known to be true by its own evidence, and not because of the evidence of some other perception which itself is suspect. If this is so, no perception is really true, for no perception is known to be true by its own evidence or is self-evidently true. Once we admit the possibility of error in perception, the whole case for the truth of perception goes. We are admitting that perception suffers from those deficiencies which accrue to knowledge through interference of the subject. It is illogical to hold that some perceptions are true

and others false. If we cannot stand by the thesis that all perceptions are true, the only alternative left to us is that all perception is false.

But if that is so, the perceived sensible world is not the reality. It is only a false appearance of what is *not sensible.* There is thus a case for an ultimate and transcendental error, which cannot be corrected by empirical methods. The error which can be so corrected is secondary in importance. It is not based on any valid epistemological principle. It is based on practical considerations only. Truth is that which works, error is that which does not. Theoretically speaking, truth here looks like error. The so-called true perception is not superior, on the basis of its internal evidence, to the so-called erroneous perception. The theoretically perfect kind of knowledge must be different from both. It must be no perception at all. It must be a species of knowledge that is direct and immediate, and that does not suffer from any kind of subjective interference. It is the business of philosophy to point to this kind of knowledge.

It may now be said that the higher knowledge suggested above is not humanly attainable. The knowledge that is humanly attainable is scientific knowledge. It is the only knowledge about which people can agree and which is therefore worth talking about. Although this knowledge begins to grow more and more speculative as we progress in the understanding of nature, it has at all stages a basis of fact in our sensible experience. It co-ordinates and interprets facts in the best possible manner. Philosophy cannot add anything to it. It does not give us exact knowledge of any kind. It is just useless speculation about super-sensible or metaphysical reality which we cannot know. If philosophy is to justify itself, it must have a humbler task which is within the competence of our reason. So far as knowledge of reality is concerned, there is no doubt that science is the last word.

This is a possible view, which scientists and scientifically-minded people can take about the role of philosophy. But

this is not a correct view. We cannot *set a limit* to what philosophy can or cannot do. It all depends upon what questions we raise and what methods we employ in order to solve them. Scientific knowledge itself, however well tested, has its limitations. It is subjective and hypothetical. It represents only a certain stage in our theoretical venture. Philosophy grows out of our dissatisfaction with all forms of provisional truth and with all our knowledge that is open to correction and cancellation. It is no wonder therefore that the philosophy of truth transforms itself into a philosophy of error. We must be sensitive to error in its most subtle form. It is only as we guard ourselves against every form of error that we can get to the goal of truth. There is no *via media* between absolute truth and error. "Ask yourself whether a particular piece of knowledge is absolute truth not open to modification, doubt or error. If you can satisfy yourself that it is so, then your search for truth has come to an end. If not, reject it outright as a piece of error. It is either perfect truth or it is illusion". The philosophy of non-dualism takes its stand on this absolute division of truth and error.

We conclude that the aim of philosophy is direct and intuitive knowledge which is not open to cancellation, and which is therefore absolutely true. All our present knowledge is *mediated* knowledge. Mediated knowledge is erroneous knowledge. The philosophic way of knowledge consists in taking us away from all forms of error. It is truth through the negation of error. The contention of Advaitism is that this truth is non-dualistic and absolute. A precondition of philosophic knowledge therefore is that the world as we know it is illusory and so a product of error.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN INNER CONTRADICTION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF NON-DUALISM

We have so far tried to show that the philosophy of non-dualism entails the illusoriness of the world of differences. We have now to examine the counter thesis that the very fact that we know a world of differences contradicts the truth of non-dualism.

It is argued that the world, by whatever name we call it, is clearly something. It is not nothing, like the son of a barren woman. We have no question about the son of a barren woman. But we have quite a legitimate question about the world. We cannot dismiss the world altogether. We must accept it and accommodate it in any notion of reality. It would therefore be fallacious to say that Reality is non-dualistic or that it is without internal or external differences.

The natural solution to suggest, from the stand-point of Advaitism, would be that the world cannot be denied all reality. Only it has a lower or subordinate reality. It is not as real as Brahman. Brahman is timelessly real, while the world with everything in it is real only in time and space and is causally determined. Again, all things in the world are relative in nature, while Brahman is non-relative and absolute. Brahman is the object of a knowledge which can never be sublated, while the world is the object of a knowledge which is always open to correction and cancellation. Lastly, Brahman does not demand a world; but the world demands Brahman, because it achieves its appearance only through its relation to intelligence (*caitanya* or *citi*). Brahman is thus the ground of the world.

There is duality when two things are equally real or real in the same sense. But if the reality of the one is subordi-

nate to the reality of the other and so dependent upon it, there is no duality. The nature of the subordination however can be a problem. There is a sense in which the part is subordinate to the whole. But the world is certainly no part of Brahman. It is completely negated in Brahman. The only other way of subordination of one form of reality to another is the subordination of the illusory to the real ground. The world does have this kind of subordination. Here we cannot level the charge of duality; for the illusory has no being of its own,—it is a mere appearance which subsists in the ground, which alone is real.

This appears plausible. We may however persist in asking,—but whence the illusory? Does not the illusory require an explanation? In the nature of things themselves there can be nothing illusory. There can be only stark reality. The illusory has to be brought into being. What can bring it into being except the real itself? The real must therefore have a *sufficient reason* within it for bringing forth the so-called illusory world. The latter cannot therefore be wholly unrelated to the real. It must somehow be traceable to the real and be itself real.

A way out of this difficulty can be found if we account for the illusory appearance of a world, not only through Brahman, but also through the cosmic power of *māyā.* Brahman is the permanent ground of the world. But the super-imposition of the illusory upon it can only be done by the creative power of *māyā.* This, however, merely shifts the question. If *māyā* is not a power *of* Brahman and *in* Brahman, there is evident dualism. But if it is a power *of* Brahman, there is an internal difference in Brahman. There is Brahman *and māyā.* The world of differences can in this way be traced to the reality of Brahman Himself. Brahman with His power of *māyā* has created the world and is the cause of the world. This is not Advaitism.

To save pure Advaitism, we shall have to take a step farther. The so-called power of Brahman or the power of *māyā* is not itself real. It has a dependent status. It is

itself illusory. As the power of error, it can only function *on* the basis of intelligence and also produce results *for* intelligence. It has no kind of independent existence either outside Brahman or within Brahman. It is entirely grounded in Brahman like any illusory appearance. This saves Advaitism.

The argument is *ontologically* correct. But thought cannot *logically* get rid of dualism. There is for it still Brahman *and māyā*. Brahman is non-active and in a sense ineffective. *Māyā* is active and creative. We may call names to the creative power; but we cannot argue it into non-existence. Thought cannot therefore achieve the ideal of non-dualism logically.

Now here we must admit that once we admit the entity called *māyā*, we cannot get rid of it on purely logical considerations. It will always be there as an adjunct (*upādhi*) to Brahman. All we can do is to show its metaphysical status. Brahman is ontologically real in-itself or absolutely real. Māyā, as the power of creating illusions, needs Brahman, and is therefore ontologically dependent. But thought cannot be quieted by the mere intellectual recognition of the dependent and illusory status of *māyā*. Something more is needed in order to transform the intellectual recognition into the unquestioned truth of non-dualism. That something is some kind of spiritual discipline directed towards the full realization of the truth in direct knowledge. It is a natural supplement to the philosophical endeavour. In other words, psychology must reinforce and fulfil logic. What we accept on reason must be seen through intuition. We should feel a kind of awakening as from a dream. When we wake up from a dream, the dream-perception is cancelled by the waking knowledge. The perception in question is not logically denied, but it is epistemologically discarded; and when it is completely discarded or discarded from the heart, it ceases to be a problem. It is just forgotten. We no more concern ourselves with dream-objects than we do with unreal things which are not possible objects of experience. Until and unless *māyā* and all its effects are forgotten and

reduced to the status of unreal objects (*tûchha*), the mind cannot be completely free from the illusion and it cannot be in full awareness of Brahman.

It will now be seen that the question, where does *māyā* come from?, is an illegitimate question. It presupposes that *māyā* is something real besides Brahman. But that supposition is wrong. If *māyā* were something of the kind, Brahman would not be Brahman. Those who see Brahman do not see anything beside It, and vice-versa. An illegitimate question cannot be directly answered. It can only be seen not to arise, and thus eliminated. Most questions of metaphysics have this illegitimate character. They are born of wrong suppositions. When therefore these questions are eliminated through a correct analysis of experience, metaphysics has a kind of holiday.

In the present case, all our metaphysical questions must stop with the recognition of the illusory character of *māyā* itself. We can make no legitimate problem about the illusory. The illusory does not exist in the simple sense of the term. Certain things however may be noted about the illusory: (a) The epithet "illusory" can only refer to that which appears. That which does not appear and which is not a possible *object* of knowledge cannot be illusory. Brahman, by its very nature, cannot be illusory. (b) The illusory must have a ground of reality. The illusory world can have no other ground of reality than Brahman. (c) The illusory is what is created. It cannot be created by the real. It can only be created by the power of erroneous perception which itself is in the end illusory. This is its only sufficient reason. (d) The power of erroneous perception requires no further explanation. It is an ultimate irrationality. It is in a sense self-explanatory; because to recognise it is to be free from it. (e) No residual problem is left over after this consummation.

The explanation of the illusory world is supposed to stop with the conception of ignorance (*ajñāna*) or the conception of *māyā* (power of illusion-making). These are not really two different things. Each must be understood to be

a sufficient and final explanation of the appearance of an illusory world. Only *ajñāna* emphasises the power of ignorance, while *māyā* emphasises the power of illusion. The two powers are intimately connected. Normally we find that ignorance precedes error of perception. If there is no ignorance, there is no error. But ignorance by itself does not explain error. There is no necessary connection between the two. One can be ignorant, and yet not commit error. There is only a *possibility* of error, or in certain cases a *tendency* to it. Ignorance may in this sense be said to be a fertile ground of error. Once however an error of perception has taken place, the only way to get rid of it completely and for good is to remove the ignorance. Knowledge of the truth is absolutely inimical to the very possibility of error. It is in this sense that *ajñāna* is said to be the ultimate principle of explanation for the appearance of an illusory world.

There is however another respect in which *māyā* can more appropriately be said to be the ultimate principle in question. The world is explained not so much by ignorance, which does not contain the sufficient reason for the illusory appearance of the world, but by the power of erroneous perception which is the power of *māyā*. Mere *ajñāna* which does not lead to the illusion of duality is not a bondage. It is wholly innocuous. We can ignore it altogether; for we can hardly be aware of it. The moment however we are aware of it, we have the perception of duality. We perceive something different from Brahman. Can this perception be anything but erroneous? Thus we find that in the end the error of perception goes beyond ignorance and explains ignorance itself as an adjunct of Brahman. In other words, ignorance can be explained through error, but error cannot be further explained or explained through ignorance. Perhaps it is a matter of how we look at it. We can go beyond error to ignorance, and we can also go beyond ignorance to error. To us it appears that the distinction between *ajñāna* and *māyā* is unnecessary. But if it has got to be made, then the concept of *māyā* is more fundamental as a principle of explanation.

Explanation is a legitimate demand of thought. But it has necessarily its limitations. It takes for granted the truth of certain explanatory concepts. When I want to explain an occurrence, I must take for granted the truth of the concept of 'cause'. If I criticise the concept of 'cause', which can easily be done, no explanation on the basis of that concept is possible. We therefore accept the concept as quite intelligible and adequate for the purposes of a conventional explanation. It cannot give a *real* explanation. It merely satisfies a practical need of every-day life. The theoretical question of explanation remains unanswered and perhaps unanswerable.

It is different with a philosophical explanation. It does not explain literally. What it does is to dissolve the problem. The world may be explained through *māyā*. But what explains *māyā*? Perhaps *māyā* requires no further explanation. But this answer may not satisfy. What philosophy therefore does is to raise the whole problem beyond the level of discursive thought, which first makes unreal distinctions within reality and then raises artificial problems on the basis of those distinctions. Philosophy explains by trying to get at an inside view of reality. Once we succeed in this, and know reality in its wholeness and undividedness, the endless questions of thought, moving in endless circles, have been finally laid to rest. If our facts are erroneous, the questions to which they give rise are erroneous too, and so are their possible solutions. An illegitimate question can be seen to be illegitimate, and that perfectly dissolves the question. An illegitimate question cannot be answered directly as though it were legitimate and proper. What is primarily needed therefore is to reform our view of reality. We must change our facts if they are not true. It is possible that criticism reveals that sensible experience distorts reality. In that case, we must have a view of reality which is beyond sense and thought. Truth is based on an internal view of reality, explanation is based on an external view. Philosophy seeks truth, not explanation.

It is sometimes said, and with great conviction, that all things cannot be understood or explained by thought. The

mystery of creation, for instance, is bound to remain. While this may be true, we need not be unduly sceptical of reaching the absolute truth, if we go about our business in the right manner. Discursive thought is bound to remain in perpetual bewilderment, because its approach is essentially external and erroneous. It is not proper to ask questions which are based on error; for it is these very questions that thought finds insoluble. There is no incapacity in thought as such to comprehend the truth. But it must not proceed on wrong suppositions and wrong facts. It is the main business of philosophy to make thought conscious of the error of its starting point, and to lift it up to the higher stand-point of truth. This it does through the dual process of criticism and positive knowledge. In Advaita Vedanta, knowledge of the Self or knowledge of Brahman cancels all other knowledge, and puts an end to all those problems which arise from ignorance and error.

We cannot *deduce* the world from Brahman; because the world is a product of erroneous knowledge. But we can explain the world in another way. We can try to see beyond the world,—the reality which is the ground of the world. That suffices for an ultimate explanation. Reason ought to be satisfied. For it can make no legitimate problem. But in the absence of the higher knowledge, the problem is there; and the problem, once admitted, is insoluble on purely logical grounds. What logic demands by way of explanation is homogeneity and unity. To explain a world, we must have a super-world, which somehow contains the world which we know. Such an explanation is metaphysically impossible.

There is a lower reason and there is a higher reason. The lower reason is satisfied with conventional explanations and demands more of them. The higher reason goes to the very source of the problem of explanation. It seeks to have a closer look at reality. If our method of knowledge is changed and if reality reveals itself to us for what it is, we have no problem of explanation any more. We shall perhaps then find that the complexity of a world of facts is reduced to the simplicity of ultimate and self-evident truth.

CHAPTER XXVII

UNITY IN DIFFERENCE

We have accepted the view that ultimate reality is a simple unity and that differences of all kinds are illusory. This may not be found acceptable. There are reasons against it. A unity must be a unity *of something.* It must have some content which it brings together into a unity. Without any content, it is a mere abstraction. A simple unity is a nullity. There is nothing in our experience to answer it. As against this abstraction of a unity which cannot explain the known differences, we can form the concept of a differentiated whole in which both the differences and the unity are present and real. Nothing need be illusory. Everything is real and contained in the real. Reality is an integrated whole. We, in our ignorance and the limitation of our knowledge, break up this whole, and re-relate the parts externally. That gives rise to endless problems. The real remedy is not to go on seeking a solution of these problems on the basis of discursive thought, but to reconstitute in our experience that vision of reality which will do justice to the Whole. Here the ideal of philosophic truth is fully kept in view. Only this truth is no longer considered simple and undifferentiated.

This ideal of a differentiated unity is not acceptable to us for various reasons: (a) The opposition between unity and difference is not annulled. It would be annulled if we could raise the differences to the unity, or if we degraded the unity to the differences. But we do neither. For unity is there, and differences *also* are there. We do not reconcile the two. The result is that the unity itself becomes something *different,* and so disappears altogether, leaving behind differences only. We are, as a matter of fact, obliged to liquidate either the unity or the differences. We ourselves have chosen to liquidate the differences. The view

under consideration does the opposite. The ideal of a differentiated unity is thus seen to be self-contradictory.

(b) A differentiated unity may be understood *teleologically*. But such unity is spurious. It is the unity of purpose only. It has no ontological value. A real differentiated unity within our experience is found only in the case of substance and its qualities. The problem, however, of relating intelligibly substance and its qualities will always remain insoluble, if the two are regarded as *equally real* on the analogy of a pin-cushion and the pins. There is no fundamental distinction of nature between the pin-cushion and the pins; for both are equally substantival. We solve the problem by treating all adjectives as illusory super-impositions upon the underlying substance which is the only reality. We thus liquidate differences altogeher in our view of the ultimate unity. Differences fall within the unity, but they are not real. They are illusory in character.

(c) A differentiated unity will be a finite unity. The qualifying differences will act as limitations. But then there is no sense in calling it an ultimate unity. It is just an element in a wider whole which includes it. What value can we give to its unitary character? Only a simple and undifferentiated unity can answer to our requirements of a real whole and a real unity. It is unqualified and unlimited.

(d) It might be said that there is no such thing as a simple and undifferentiated unity. Where that appears to be the case, differences are already contained in it in a subtle form, so that they cannot be perceived. But this is only dogmatism. If differences are not perceived, why should we suppose that they are there? But even if they are there, the problem of reconciling them to the unity is not annulled. More generally, we do take exception to the view that in order to explain differences, we must go to other or subtler differences; for then we do not explain differences as such. We take them for granted. They have simply no relation to the unity, and they cannot be deduced from the latter.

(e) It may now be said that all known differences can be traced to a spiritual unity such as God. They are not, to begin with, real. They are only possibilities in the mind of God. When any of these possibilities are willed, they become actualities. The differences are therefore not wholly illusory. The will of God is quite real, and it lends something of its reality to what we know as a world of differences. God *creates* a world, *sustains* it through His will, and can *retract* it by the same will.

The whole problem of explanation here is transferred from the world to God, its cause. Is God a real unity? A real spiritual unity such as Brahman can do nothing. It cannot create a world. God is not such a unity. He is a person with a will and much more. This will cannot operate without some inner pressure of desire or purpose. But if that is so, the spiritual unity is already disrupted from within. The unity is at the mercy of motivating forces, which cannot be derived from it and are in a sense alien to it. The problem of unity and difference arises in another form. Difference is somehow already there, challenging the unity. Mere will, even free will, explains nothing. A will that is truly free, and that is not affected, influenced or dominated by contending forces of desire, good or bad, will remain quiescent and uncreative. There is never a creation out of pure freedom. We degrade the unity of God when we subject it to the contending forces of desire and motivation.

There is another objection to this view. Granting the creativity of God, can the will of God create something real? The creations of the will are clearly dependent upon the will. The will can put them forth and also retract them. They can perhaps have, under certain circumstances, a pseudo-reality or appearance of reality. They can never have an independent reality, which is our only meaning of reality. This reality lies in the subject creating, not in the object created. If God is the Creator, God is the reality, not that which He creates. How can we substantiate the reality of a world of differences which is created?

It is just the opposite. What is created is the illusory. The illusory has no being in itself. A creation has an appearance of reality when it is falsely identified with something that is real in itself; or alternatively, when it is part of a dream or a fantasy. A real thing is never created.

The only genuine ontological unity is the unity which tolerates no differences. If differences never-the-less appear, they can only be illusory appearances. There can be no compromise between unity and difference. The concept of a unity in difference is the result of a confusion of thought. Unity must be pure or it is no unity at all. This is the only bold, logical and straight-forward view.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DO WE EXPLAIN?

The ideal of explanation is the perception of necessity. The conclusions of formal logic may be said to have this necessity. Reality cannot be said to have any such necessity. It cannot be formally deduced from some other reality or contained in it. Reality must be just in itself. If it is related to some other reality, the relation cannot be a necessary one.

Reality is sometimes said to be caused by some other reality. But the causal relation explains nothing. If the cause is identical with the effect, there is nothing to explain. If it is not identical, no explanation is given as to how one thing can issue out of another. The law of reason is the law of identity. Being cannot come out of non-being, and vice-versa. If the cause ceases to exist before the effect arises, this law of reason is violated. As a matter of fact, if we are strict with this law, that which does not exist cannot come to exist, and what does exist cannot cease to exist. Real existence is eternal existence; and all appearances to the contrary are just *māyic,* pointing to the illusory character of all those things which appear to come into being or to go out of being.

Satkāriya-vāda, according to which the effect already exists in the cause, cannot explain the difference between the cause and the effect; and *asatkāriya-vāda,* according to which the effect is non-existent in the cause, cannot explain how one thing can come out of another or how being can come out of non-being. It is true that things happen in a certain way. But their happening cannot be rendered *intelligible,* and must be pronounced *māyic.*

Can we replace the causal relation by the logical relation of ground and consequent? The ground literally contains the consequent. The temporal relation of cause and

effect can also be interpreted in these terms. The real cause is the entire cause, which cannot be divided from its effect by any interval of empty time. The real cause *is* the effect. If there is a relation between the two, it is the relation of identity. More generally, the time-factor is illusory. Everything is as it eternally is in the whole. Nothing really happens there, and nothing is caused to exist. What is, eternally is. The idea of *necessity* is irrelevant to reality. Reality either *is* or it *is not*. When we say of a thing that it *is*, we have said all that is relevant and all that is intelligible. No further explanation is needed. It will be futile to reduce the 'is' into a 'must'.

If we accept this view, we cannot consistently demand an explanation for the existence of anything whatsoever. The only relevant question to ask would be, does the something in question really exist or does it only appear to exist illusorily? The whole question of explanation is thus simplified. Explanation is not only unavailable in the domain of reality, but the very demand for it is illegitimate. Philosophy need not explain, and it does not explain. To require it to explain is to misconceive the role of Philosophy.

Now we may all admit that there is some mystery about the world of our experience. This mystery requires to be resolved. We find that there is nothing eternal here. Things happen. They are in time. Their happening is a mystery to us. We seek to understand this happening by getting at the laws of the occurrence of things. The laws themselves are mere statements of facts. They do not explain anything. The mystery of the whole drama of the world-process thus remains. Science cannot help us in resolving this mystery. Can philosophy help? We think that it can, and it does.

Philosophy has a well-defined programme in this connection. It can prove certain things, and taken together they resolve the mystery:

(a) Philosophy can show that there is a reality which is eternally true, and which therefore offers no problem. There is no mystery about it.

(b) Secondly, it can show that what does not eternally exist does not *really* exist. It does not exist in the beginning, it does not exist in the end, and it only *appears* to exist in the middle. It is not substantival in character,—it only appears to be so. It is not being *in-itself*,—it is dependent being only.

(c) Thirdly, what appears to exist but does not really exist is what we call *illusory*.

(d) Fourthly, the illusory is by its very nature inexplicable. It is not explicable in terms of the real, because it has no real relation with it. It is perhaps explicable in terms of the illusory. But then we are not going beyond the illusory or explaining the illusory as such.

(e) Fifthly, there is no mystery about the illusory once it is exposed. We know that the illusory does not exist and its appearance to the contrary can be traced to a subjective error. In terms of objective reality, the illusory snake exists as little as the square-circle. There are no degrees of reality. So far as the subjective error is concerned, that too offers no problem. The perception of the illusory is itself an illusory perception. It is only an appearance of perception,—not a real perception. No-one can claim that he perceived a snake, when the snake itself has been cancelled as illusory.

(f) Lastly, all so-called explanations belong to the realm of the illusory. There can be no explanation of the illusory as such. Once therefore our experience is analysed into the real and the illusory, the problem of explanation ceases to have any meaning. Neither the real nor the illusory poses any further problem.

The concept of māyā in Advaita Vedanta thus does not literally explain. If it explains, it explains in the sense that it does away with the problem of explanation itself. All it does is to show *that* in our experience which is eternally real and *that* which is illusory. It is in this sense a designatory concept (it gives things their correct ontological

designation). It is not literally an explanatory concept. But it does all the work that is expected of explanation at lower levels. Explanation removes a problem. So does the concept of māyā. For as soon as we recognise the illusory, we are free from the illusory. We have no further problem.

We conclude that Advaitism does not literally explain anything. It lifts the whole problem of explanation to a higher level. It resolves the mystery of being, and that leaves no problem on our hands.

CHAPTER XXIX

EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN FORMS OF EXPLANATION

A. It may now be said that we have taken a too restricted view of explanation. There are other ways in which explanation is possible. One such way is that although things appear contingent to us, they are not so in reality. They are necessarily related to other things and to the whole. If therefore we want to know any of them completely, we must try to know the whole. Conversely, to know the whole is to know everything as it really exists in the whole. The view that the whole alone is ultimately real is a requirement of reason; and reality must be responsive to reason. Reason demands coherence, system, inclusiveness and wholeness.

That reality must be responsive to reason appears to us to be no more than a dogma. There is no reason why reality should not be irrational or super-rational. It does not consist of ideas which can be deduced from other ideas or which can include other ideas. The only way to determine the nature of reality is to criticise our present method of knowledge and to evolve a method which is above criticism. In the absence of this method, we are simply having recourse to speculation. The rational requirements of reality stated above have this speculative character. But speculation is not a method of knowledge. It is only imagination. To imagine a whole is not to know the whole. Besides, we have no model, in our present experience, of a whole which is prior to the parts and more real than the parts. The wholes which we know are wholes made out of parts, which are ontologically distinct and even prior, but united only teleologically. There is no whole in which the parts derive their very being from their relation to other parts in the whole. The only case where a part, e.g., a finite appearance, derives its very being

from a certain necessary relation is that of the illusory. The illusory is necessarily related to the ground, from which it derives all the being it appears to have. Here we have simply to recognise the ontological status of the illusory in relation to the ontological status of the ground. There is no question of any further explanation. The illusory is no doubt contained in the ground in a sense, but it does not make a system with it. The notions of coherence, all-inclusiveness and system are quite inapplicable to the real.

The demands of reason are necessarily formal. They are quite consistent with different varieties of real content. They do not tell us what reality should be or actually is. This is a matter for experience or some form of direct intuition. There are sensible intuitions, and reason can systematise them in order to give us knowledge of the world. If these were all, there would be no such thing as knowledge of the super-sensible. But if there is some other form of intuition also, it is obligatory upon reason to recognise it and to bring out its full implications in our experience. We can thus raise our experience to a higher level and definitive knowledge of what is in itself super-sensible. This is where philosophy supersedes science. It gives us a species of knowledge otherwise not available. If however it is true that there is no intuition of the super-sensible to begin with, we must at least be candid as to the aims of philosophy. It can give us no real knowledge. For speculation is not knowledge. It is only a subjective way of contemplating reality and has no more than an aesthetic value.

B. In contradistinction to the absolutistic mode of explanation, there is another which admits a certain amount of contingency and of inexplicability. Leibnitz enunciated the principle of sufficient reason. There must be sufficient reason in the ultimate nature of reality why the world is what it is. Evidently, sufficient reason does not amount to the perception of any necessity. We substitute for necessity the faith that there must be good and sufficient reason why things are what they are. A certain amount of inexplicability

is therefore admitted here. The principle of sufficient reason is accordingly supplemented by the ethical principle that the world is after all perhaps the best of all possible worlds. God, let us say, chose the world that He thought would work best and realize the highest value, although a different world was equally possible to Him. The view clearly leaves the mystery where it is, unsolved, and substitutes for the knowledge of the necessity of things a rational faith that the ultimate source of things is not irrational and that it is not indifferent to goodness or the realization of values. This is only an apology of an explanation. Its chief merit is to reassure a religious mind that the nature of things is not alien to human reason and human values. It combines intellectual modesty with moral assurance.

C. A somewhat different view is suggested by the argument that the actual can only be explained by the actual, but that the actual *as such* cannot be explained. In the series of actualities, we are naturally forced to go to the beginning of things. Here we must accept the ultimate actuality of the primordial nature of God. God had infinite possibilities of a world before Him. All He has done is to transform a certain possibility into actuality in accordance with His own nature. God being what He is, the world is what it is. We may believe in an ethical God or not. But what we cannot deny is a God that is simply the name of the First Actuality, beyond which it is not possible to go. God explains the world in this sense. It is the ultimate term in the series of actualities and does not therefore itself require an explanation.

This view makes too large an assumption by assuming an ultimate term with a nature of its own, which cannot be further explained. An actuality is something that occurs in time. A primordial actuality that does not accur in time is actuality in no sense. It may be a timeless or beginningless reality. But then it is something eternal; and the eternal cannot *begin* to do anything. There can be no *reason* in the eternal for a world of any kind. But a perpetually growing God with one end in infinite possibilities and the other in

endless and growing actualities will satisfy neither religion nor philosophy. It will only make the mystery of the world-process more mysterious.

It is quite intelligible when theists, whose interest is essentially religious, postulate the primordial reality of God. God for them has pre-eminent reality. He is the first and the last of all things. There is no distinction in God between a primordial nature and a consequent nature. His nature is eternal. As against this nature stands the changing and the non-eternal world-process. It is the latter that alone needs explanation; and the best explanation, to the theists at least, appears to be that God created the world simply through the *power* of His will. So the causality and the eternal reality of God become all-important. It is not so in the view under consideration, where God Himself is divided into a primordial nature and a consequent nature. God is thus only a name here for the uncertain and unknown beginnings of things, where all is dark for us. The use of the word 'God' in such an explanation appears almost sacrilegious.

We cannot explain the more real by the less real or the actual by the possible. We also cannot explain one reality by another same-level reality, or one actuality by another actuality. We can only explain the lower by the higher or the actual by the non-actual and the eternal. A spiritual explanation of non-spiritual reality is, in this sense, in the right direction.

D. Advaitism does this in a purely philosophical way and without the theistic hypothesis. Brahman is not *a person* or a hypothetical individual. It is a reality that can be recognised or literally known in our own experience. It can also be shown to be in the beginning of things and the only ultimate cause of the world.

The cause has pre-eminent reality. The effect is real only in so far as it is identical with the cause; in-so-far however as it is different, it is not real but illusory. The cause here is Brahman, the eternal. The eternal can do nothing.

It just remains itself. Brahman therefore does not create; it also does not *become* the world or *change into* the world. It is only *misperceived* as the world. If the world is created, it is the creation of this misperception. It is created by *māyā;* and ontologically, *māyā* has only a dependent and illusory character. Brahman is in this sense *the only cause,* not Brahman *and* māyā. Brahman is the eternal and the substantival cause (*vivarta upādāna*).

We conclude that the world is nothing but Brahman. Anything to the contrary is just illusory. To ask the *why* and the *wherefore* of the world is to ask for good reasons for it in the nature of reality itself, i.e. Brahman in this case. But then the world would not be illusory, but a part of reality; and a part of reality requires no explanation. It is itself reality.

CHAPTER XXX

CREATION

Temporalists as well as eternalists have to accept the notion of creativity in some form or other. It may be that the world in time and space was created in the very distant past. It may be that creativity is a present fact going on before our eyes. What is certain is that anything happening in time can only be understood in terms of a creative act or process.

The more common view, supported by science, would appear to be that there is a series of creative acts in which each act creates some kind of being, and then itself lapses. The being that is created becomes in its turn a creator, and so on in an endless and infinite series. There is no such thing as a permanent and eternal creator. If there was one, he could not act. Change could not possibly issue out of the changeless. This view, however, that the permanent alone can create a world in time is widely accepted by men of religion, and they have their own reasons for it. It is the ancient and traditional view of creation. The difference between the two views is the difference between Buddhism based on reason alone and Vedanta based on scriptural authority and a form of reasoning that conforms to it.

Let us first take up the view that the timeless and the eternal alone creates if anything creates. It is commonly supposed that God, the Eternal, created the world *at a certain time*. But can this be literally true? If God created the world, did He not also create time with it? The world is nothing but a series of events; and time is only the generalised form of the series. Time does not stand outside the series as a kind of permanent receptacle to receive the series. That would turn time into eternity. Time is just

the series itself. He who creates the series creates time also. How can it be argued that God created the world *in time*? There is no time before creation. Before creation there can only be the timeless and the eternal. The eternal moves not and acts not. The moment he does that, he is *in* the series. He cannot stand outside the series as the creator of the series.

If our analysis is correct, we have the eternal on one side and the series of events on the other. Where shall we put the act of creation itself? Evidently, we cannot put it outside time. It is after all an occurrent and so part of time. How can a part of time account for time as such or as a whole? We thus find that any attempt to bridge the gulf between the temporal and the eternal is doomed to failure. If there is a temporal series, we cannot say that it has a beginning in time or that it is created by what is outside time. It is bound to be a beginningless series. If time is created at all, it is created as beginningless. As a matter of fact, nothing is *really created*. For there can be no real relation between the eternal and the non-eternal or the temporal. The only relation between them can be that of false identity. All creation takes place as the result of this relation, which is not a real relation.

Time and all that exists in time is a creation in this sense. It is an illusory creation. The illusory arises out of reality, stays in reality, and goes back to reality. All these three moments are part of its nature. When it is said that God, the Eternal, created the world, it is not always said that the world stays in God, and it is almost never said that the world goes back to God. Such creation is only a half-truth, and very inadequate at that. It gives a sort of reality to the world independent of God. But if creation has any meaning, it is in the complete dependence of the world upon God. Complete dependence is only possible, when all the three moments of that which is created are dependent. It then becomes indistinguishable from the illusory, which is clearly seen to be so dependent. Time then with all its apparent beginning-

lessness and endlessness is just an illusory appearance in the timeless.

Certain Idealistic philosophers, influenced largely by the Theistic tradition, cannot accept such a conclusion. Time for them is very real indeed and so is the changing and the moving world in time. As philosophers, they want to go to the beginning of things. This they find in the great and infinite personality of God. For them God is real, His will is real, and the world which He creates through His will is real also. Since God is also the good, there must be a great and divine purpose in the creation of the world. Thus the whole historical process takes on a new kind of reality. It becomes the means of God's purposes in time.

This spiritualization of history however is not without certain inconvenient questions. Does God intervene actively in history for the achievement of His purposes, and does He Himself direct the course of events in time? If He does, then what becomes of human freedom? All history becomes transcendental history or divine history. The drama of history is only a make-believe of a drama, since everything proceeds according to a pre-determined plan, and the omnipotent God leaves nothing to chance, accident and free development. If, however, we try to save human freedom, the drama becomes a real drama, in which the will of God is only one factor. But then there is no guarantee for the achievement of God's purposes. God is thus shorn of all His glory and omnipotence. God becomes a part of history. He cannot be the sole creator and director of the world-process. Time becomes equally important; for it embraces God Himself, who can have His purposes fulfilled or defeated in time.

We contend that history has a goal and a meaning only from the limited human stand-point. Accordingly it can have a meaning and a goal only for a limited or humanised God. It has no meaning for the Eternal. All purpose is human purpose, and all achievement is an indication of the finitude of

effort. There are no purposes in the Eternal and no achievements. The whole process in time would appear to be, from this higher stand-point, a mere appearance without substance or value.

Reality of time *for us* is rooted in an inner poverty or lack of spiritual discernment. It is because we find nothing *great* within ourselves, that we naturally seek to live an outer life and so expand ourselves in time. We set certain ends and purposes to ourselves; and when these are achieved, we feel a heightened sense of being. This is just a human failing, the failing of a finite being, who tries to compensate for inner poverty with achievements in the outer world. Naturally, therefore, when we conceive God on the human model, some of our failings stick to Him. What is needed is to reverse the process. Instead of making man the model for God, we should make God the model for man. This we do, when we lift our discernment to a higher level and find the Eternal within us. Those who find the Great God within them or find the unity of God, the Eternal Reality, with their own true Self cannot possibly find any interest or meaning in the temporal process. The Self can be seen to be the greatest treasure of joy. If true bliss can be seen to be at the very centre of our own being, what value can time achieve for us? Will it then appear to be so very real after all?

There are philosophers who are not satisfied with static bliss. For them, something more is needed to make it complete. If there is bliss at the centre of our being, it should express itself in blissful activity. The same is true about Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Bliss demands self-expression. Brahman is accordingly supposed to have created the world out of the joy of His being or in sport (*līlā*), which is the most natural expression of joy. Since activity and non-activity are alternative phases of all life, Brahman too may be conceived to have different poses. In the static pose, He is the Brahman of Advaita Vedanta. But that is a one-sided view. It ignores the dynamic pose, in which He is God the adorable and Creator of the universe with its many levels of being.

If we accept this view, Brahman becomes subject to the vicissitudes of life and inertia, sleep and wakefulness, etc. In what sense can we say that He is the Eternal. We have once again slipped into the mistake of conceiving Brahman on the analogy of man. If it is conceded that Brahman in His *being*-aspect is eternal joy, a joy that cannot be added to, what can He possibly *gain* by joyful activity? If He does gain anything, Brahman is not the perfectly joyous being He is supposed to be. But if He does not, what has His activity achieved in terms of value? The truth is that the moment Brahman *acts* or *creates*, He is bound to be controlled by those forces of ignorance or desire which determine activity and withdrawal of activity in man.

We contend that the joy of *being* is the only real and enduring joy. It is also the purest, because it is not mixed up with desires and needs, which can only belong to a finite being. The joy of *activity*, on the other hand, is conditioned by desire. It is short-lived and superficial. When the desire is fulfilled, the joy lapses with it. There is a sense in which all joy is the joy of *being*. It is natural, fundamental and permanent. Occasionally, it is expressed through activity, which is initiated by some kind of inner tension or deficiency. When the tension is removed, the joy of *being* returns. This joy of *being* is the joy of the pure spirit. All other joys are the product of an ignorant union of the Spirit with the body and the mind.

We have so far considered the view that the cause of the world is something that is outside the world, something that is metaphysical in character. If we work out this view to its logical conclusion, we are forced to recognise that there can be no real creation, but only an illusory one; for the Eternal cannot *really* act or create. It is however possible to argue that there is no metaphysical reality which is the cause of the world,—for we do not know any. There is only a series of events causally connected. There is nothing immutable, nothing that is the cause eternal. Each entity is born through

the efficiency of that which precedes it, and it in its turn gives birth to that which follows it.

This picture of creativity appears truer to our experience than the one based on transcendental causality. But is it quite intelligible? How do we understand causality in general? Modern science has no use for the concept. It is too metaphysical for it. It suffices for it to note certain uniformities of nature, which are called laws of nature. But there is no necessity about these laws, and no use for the causal concept. Laws are only statistical averages and have a certain probability about them. Philosophy however cannot do without the causal concept in order to *understand* the possibility of change and connectedness of events? The only meaning that we can give to cause in our own experience is that derived from volitional causality.

It is quite intelligible to us how something which does not exist can be caused to exist through an act of the will. Will is causative. Again, something which does not exist can appear to exist through the power of erroneous perception. There is however a difference between the two forms of creativity. In the former case, what is willed is only an act, never substantival being or appearance of being. In the latter case, what is brought into being is something substantival with the appearance of independence.

Efficient causality is an instance of volition. Here a form is imposed upon a substance. Clay is made into a pot. More generally, the basic constituents of matter change their collocations, and thereby change their visible forms and qualities. A substance is never created. A substance is already presupposed. Changes in nature are in this sense a case of efficient causality, which is intelligible only in terms of the will. The will in its turn demands a first and free cause, that is cause only and never an effect. The Self of man is such a cause. It must be a timeless and immutable reality. It is in this sense that we can claim that nature demands a God.

Nature is, to all appearance, substantivally independent. But is it really so? This is a pertinent question in view of

the other form of creativity, namely that of erroneous perception. It is quite arguable that no thing is *truly perceived,* because there is no instance of true perception which will be universally acceptable. On the other hand, there are any number of instances of erroneous perception which will be so acceptable. The fact is that perception, in the best of circumstances, is open to doubt and error. This makes it easy to adopt a sceptical attitude to the whole field of perceptual knowledge, on the basis of which we seek to prove the reality of the external world. The distinction of truth and falsehood within perception is never absolute or theoretically justifiable; it is practical and provisional only. He would be a brave man who could argue that a particular perception is true *absolutely* and could not be modified or cancelled under any circumstances. But if that is so, we are confronted by the big question,—is the world substantivally real or a case of the second form of creativity, namely, that of erroneous perception?

Science is empirical. It takes facts for granted and studies their correlations. Science does not seek to render facts *intelligible* by relating them to subjective or spiritual experiences. It is interested in the object only, and it therefore abstracts from the subject as far as it is possible for it to do so. Philosophy does just the opposite. It reverses the process. It seeks intelligibility, not the so-called brute fact. Intelligibility is only possible in terms of subjective experience. The two forms of creativity which we have noted lead us straight, in the explanation of the world outside, to the efficient causality (*nimita-kāraṇa*) as well as the substantival causality (*upādāna kāraṇa*) of Brahman, the ultimate metaphysical reality. The common-sense assertion that nature is a closed system or a beginningless and endless series of events is just a scientific myth.

It may be an exaggerated subjectivism to relate all the reality there is in the world to our own personal experience, but it will free us from the scientific myth and bring us nearer to an understanding of the ultimate nature of things.

The world arises with me when I wake up. It withdraws when I go to sleep. This sleep leads to renewed wakefulness. There is this alternation of states throughout my life. In a sense then I experience the creation and the withdrawal of a world every day of my life. This creation again is not a first or an absolutely new creation. There are always the impressions or traces of past creations present in the mind that creates. Thus the series of creations has to be taken as beginningless. There is no such thing as *the very first creation,* beginning with the pure spirit. The pure spirit cannot create. It does not have the implements of creation,—the traces which take concrete shape in creation. There always was a creation, alternating with periodic withdrawal. It is in this sense that creation is beginningless.

By the logic of the finite, the ultimate creative principle is the qualified Brahman or Īśvara, the Cosmic Person. He puts forth and withdraws, even as man does in his own way on a lower plane. By the logic of the Infinite, there is no creation. Brahman, the Infinite, is essentially unqualified and stateless. It is not united to the finitising power of māyā, without which no creation is possible. We can thus have three different attitudes towards creation: (a) There is the Theistic attitude of *real creation.* (b) There is the attitude of *māyā-vāda,* according to which all creation is illusory creation. (c) And finally, there is the true Advaitic attitude, according to which, there never has been a creation, true or false. It is all one non-dualistic reality.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE CONCEPT OF *MĀYĀ*

Māyā is understood as the cosmic principle of illusion. It accounts for everything other than Brahman. It accounts for *a world in time and space.* It accounts for the *many-ness of individuals.* It accounts for everything subjective or objective that *can be known.* The only things that it does not account for are the things that require no accounting. Ultimate reality or Brahman requires no accounting; and things that are quite unreal and offer no problem to thought (*tûchha*) require no accounting.

Māyā is a *power* that creates a world different from Brahman. A power cannot exist of itself or function by itself. It must reside in some kind of being. Being is therefore primary and power is secondary. A being may be united to a power, and he may also lose the power to which he came to be united. But a power cannot exist in independence of all being. Something that is or exists, something substantival alone, can possess or wield power. Power may be a metaphysical and mysterious entity, and the distinction between being and power may be equally so. Science therefore has no use for these concepts, and it substitutes for them the concept of work done and the quantification of this work. Philosophy however does seek a meaning for them. They have a metaphysical import. We have tried to give a meaning to Brahman, who is pure being; and we can give a meaning to power in terms of *volition* or in terms of *erroneous perception. Māyā* is a power in the latter sense. It creates illusory appearances of reality.

Māyā resides *in* Brahman and functions as a power *of* Brahman. Since it is the power of creating illusory appearances only, it is best understood as the power of erroneous perception. This can be further analysed into the power of ignorance and the power of error proper. Ignorance invari-

ably prepares the ground for error. It is only one who is ignorant that can fall into error. Ignorance does not necessarily lead to error, but it is a necessary precondition of error. The power of error therefore is *in addition* to the power of ignorance. The two together make up the structure of māyā,—the power of veiling (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) and the power of distortion (*vikṣepa-śakti*).

Both these powers naturally require an *intelligent being* as their ground. Only an *intelligent being* can be ignorant and only an intelligent being can commit an error of perception. Brahman is therefore said to be the ground or *adhiṣṭhāna* of māyā. Māyā resides in Brahman and functions in it. It is not like Sāṅkhya prakṛti which can exist apart from all intelligence and therefore apart from *puruṣa* as such. Prakṛti is accordingly real in itself, māyā is not. Prakṛti produces real effects out of its own substance through the process of evolution, when it is conjoined to *puruṣa*. That cannot be said about *māyā*, which only produces illusory or non-existent effects.

Ignorance is understood to veil the true nature of reality. But not every kind of thing can be veiled. A substance that partakes of the nature of the veil cannot be further veiled. We cannot veil darkness or any kind of unintelligent stuff; for the veil itself is of the same nature. In the ultimate analysis therefore we can only veil that which is by its very nature resplendent or intelligent. We veil a light, not darkness. Since the only real light is the light of intelligence, ignorance can only be effective with regard to the intelligent being of Brahman. We are said to be ignorant of *this thing* or *that thing*. But *this thing* or *that thing* are not fit objects of ignorance unless they are themselves grounded in Brahman. The right situation would appear to be that we are ignorant of *A-conditioned* Brahman *or B-conditioned* Brahman, etc. It is always Brahman that we are ignorant of.

The power of error, like the power of ignorance, must have a ground (*āśraya*) and an *object* (*viṣaya*). The ground of both is Brahman, the ultimate pure intelligence (*nirvikāra citi*). The *object* of both too is Brahman. Erroneous percep-

tion clearly requires a real object that is erroneously perceived, e.g., the rope that is perceived as snake. The error of perception that is māyā can have no other real object except Brahman. Brahman then is the *support* of *māyā* as well as the *object* of māyā. In other words, Brahman Itself is perceived as the world through the power of māyā.

Brahman, *taken with* the creative principle of *māyā*, is called the lower Brahman or the Creator-Brahman or *Iśwara*. It is not the ultimate reality. It is not even a necessary aspect of ultimate reality. For māyā is, by its very nature, non-eternal and illusory in character. It can be dissipated; and when it is dissipated, pure unqualified Brahman alone is left. *Iśwara* is ultimate only in the limited sense of being the sole cause for the existence of an apparent world. Creation at the very highest level is an aberration, a defect, a forgetfulness. There can be no creation in the full knowledge of the true nature of ultimate reality.

It is important to note however that *māyā* does not get joined to Brahman through any cause outside itself. It is by its very nature beginningless (*anādi*). Once an error is there, the pre-condition of it is another error in the past; so that error as such is without beginning. To see a world in Brahman, I must have seen one before. To know my Self as embodied, I must have so perceived myself in the past. The world is thus beginningless in time, and so is the individual.

Māyā is without beginning, but it is not without end. It invites an end. As a beginning is quite illogical and even impossible for *māyā*, so an end is just the opposite. Error demands to be corrected and cancelled; and when it is cancelled, it leaves no residue of itself. It is wholly abolished with all its effects. This cancellation of error is not only a temporal fact, which may occur or may not occur. It is a logical necessity. Error *must be* revealed as error; and when it is so revealed, it is already transcended.

The concept of something existing without beginning but coming to an end is rather mystifying. But we must note

that the nature of *māyā* is like no other thing that we know. From a common-sense stand-point, nothing that once exists can be wholly destroyed. We cannot make a transition in thought from being to non-being. We can only make a transition from one form of being to another form of being,—clay is made into a jar, hydrogen and oxygen change into water, etc. Here nothing is destroyed except the form. We can also make a transition from relative being or apparent being or illusory being to non-being; for once we realize that these different kinds of being have no being *in-themselves*, it becomes easy to align them with what does not exist or with non-being. The illusory snake, for instance, exists as little as the son of a barren woman. *Māyā* having an end is very much like the illusory snake. The illusory never really was, is or shall be. It is non-existent in all the three times, even as reality is or exists in all the three times.

It all depends upon how a thing comes to an end. When a jar comes to an end the substance jar continues to exist in the form of broken pieces of the jar. The form alone is destroyed, for the form is nothing without the substance. The thing *as a whole* is destroyed, when its very substance is reduced to a form which cannot possibly exist by itself and must require some other substance which is not destroyed. The illusory alone is destroyed in this sense. The snake disappears altogether leaving in its place the rope. Similarly, *māyā* and all its effects disappear leaving behind Brahman alone. The illusory goes the way the *form* of the jar goes. It disappears in the underlying substance.

We cannot destroy the illusory by anything that we can *do* to it. The only way to bring it to an end is through knowledge of the underlying reality. What is brought to an end through knowledge is what never really existed at anytime. It is in this way that *māyā* is brought to an end. It is brought to an end through knowledge of Brahman. *Māyā* with all its beginninglessness is still only an illusory appearance which never really existed. It is in this sense that the beginningless can be destroyed. The nature of the end, i.e., end through knowledge, has an important bearing upon the nature of the thing ended.

CHAPTER XXXII

IS THE CONCEPT OF *IŚWARA* NECESSARY FOR ADVAITA VEDANTA?

We have seen that Brahman united with the power of *māyā* is the Creator-God or Īśwara. He alone explains the existence of a world, if anything explains.

It is now argued that this concept of *Īśwara* is quite *necessary*. Unqualified Brahman or pure Brahman cannot create. Man with his limitations also cannot create. He is, in an important sense, a *product* of creation, not its presupposition. In order that man should exist, his body, his mind, his intellect, etc. require to be first created. He who creates these creates man. Man is therefore the created, not the Creator. When he comes on the scene, the external world is already there, confronting him. His own creativity is dependent upon the existence of this world, in which he can work and produce effects. He cannot create anything absolutely. That is the function of a higher and more powerful being than man. A Creator-God is thus an absolute necessity.

Man does not only find a world confronting him,—he also finds something else which is, in a sense, even more important for him. He finds the *revealed word* or the scripture that gives him light about those things which he cannot otherwise know, and which are ultimately connected with the ultimate well-being of his life both here and in the hereafter. He derives from the scripture all his knowledge about his religious duty, the nature of the ultimate truth or God, and his relation to the truth. He cannot possibly be the origin of the revealed word and the wisdom which it communicates to him. In fact, if he were the origin, the revealed word would not have the character of being revealed from

above. It would be just man's handiwork, a product of his imagination or thought; and it could have no *authority* over him. We are obliged to conclude that God alone is the source of the word and of the truth contained in it. The revealed word is the word of God, having undisputed authority over the finite intelligence of man. God is then the Over-Soul. He is the origin of the birth, sustenance and death of the world; and He is also the origin of the scripture that reveals Him to us and that reveals those metaphysical truths which are otherwise inaccessible to us.

This argument gives a sort of objective account of creation. The individual is nowhere in the picture. The Creator-God is everything. It looks plausible. But in any such account, the *method* of creation becomes an important question, almost pivotal. Can the pure thought or the pure will of an omnipotent God create a world, or an appearance of a world, out of nothing? There is no experience we have in terms of which this can be rendered intelligible. Mere will, however powerful, cannot create substantival being or even the appearance of such being. Imagination, dominated by ignorance, can do that, as in dreams. Alternatively, erroneous perception can create an appearance of being, such as the illusory snake. Where the will creates a sort of reality, it is in the region of the form. The potter's will makes a jar out of clay. Is God a Supreme Potter?

A world created out of no substance or out of nothing is only illusorily created. It is a product of ignorance and error. A product of ignorance and error can only appear real to the person who creates it. If God has thus created the world, it can only appear real to Him. The person who perceives erroneously is the person who creates the thing he perceives. The illusory exists only for him not for another. How is it then that God has created the illusory appearance of a world, and *we* have the illusion? If there is a *common* world, it must be a *real* world. An illusory world cannot be common. And yet how is a *common real world* to be created at all? Not by the will alone.

Let us suppose that God not only creates an illusory world with individuals in it, but He also creates the illusion of a common world. It is all part of His *māyā.* But even so, the seat of illusion will be God, not man. Man can well argue: "What can I, a humble creature, do? God has made me and made me perceive a supposedly common world. I have no option except to perceive the world as presented to me. I am under a necessity, God's necessity, so to perceive it. Can I do anything about it and reject it as illusory? Since I am not the creator, I also cannot withdraw what is created. I am just part of the illusion. Until God chooses to retract His own illusory creation, I must continue to perceive the world as I do, and behave as a man under the power of illusion. It is not for me to penetrate or dispel God's *māyā.* Perhaps God can do, and He can also undo, if he has the power and the will. I can do no more than all the creatures of an illusory creation."

Philosophy is a science of the Divine. It seeks to raise the individual to a vision of Divinity. The argument given above has just the opposite effect. In substance, it tells the individual: "You are a condemned man. You cannot break your shackles. You are a creature of God, and as such you are condemned to live a creature's life, full of bondage in every respect. The only consolation you can get is that your suffering and your bondage is part of the great illusion from which God suffers". It is a view degrading to both God and man.

Instead, however, of transferring the illusion of a world to God, who is supposed to be above illusion and the possessor of all auspicious qualities, we should do well to replace this speculative idea of creation by a distant God by creation as it can be found within human experience. After all, the Great Brahman is not to be located in the wide world around us or even beyond that world. He is no other than the Self of man. The most revealing text of the Upaniṣads is not *"all this is Brahman"*, but *"thou art that"*. If Brahman then is only found in the inmost Self of man, then *māyā* can reside

and produce its effects nowhere else except in this very Self. A distant God can solve none of our problems. But those problems become easy to tackle, if we can bring the Creator-God within ourselves and are thus enabled to scrutinize the mode of his functioning.

A real world is never created. The only thing that is created is the appearance of a world. This appearance is created by the entity that perceives it. Simply put, where the world appears, there it is created. No-one freely and in full knowledge of the ultimate truth creates anything. He creates only in ignorance and error. All creation is erroneous creation. The individual, therefore, as a complex entity, may be taken as the seat of creation. As the Self, he is the support of *māyā*. As an individual with certain physical and mental limitations, he is part of the *māyic* creation. Creation is a present fact which the individual can introspectively and reflectively know. All things inner and outer are *to me*. They appear *to me*. They are *my creations*. What is not my creation is my Self. That *alone* is the pre-supposition of all creativity in me. The mystery of creation is no longer a mystery. To perceive anything apart from Brahman is to create it in that very perception. It is I who perceives a world, not God. Then I am the creator of that world,—and this world extends to all those inner workings of mine, including my perceptions, which make me an individual. In this sense, I am the creator of my own individuality; and that creator becomes no other than the Absolute Self, which is the only uncreated reality.

We think of Brahman and His *māyā* as a distant and mysterious affair. That is because it is for us a speculative idea. We dissolve the mystery by bringing these concepts within our own experience and giving them meaning there. Brahman is the self-revealing reality within us called *pṛtyag-ātman.* Māyā is the name of that power of error which creates all appearances for us,—the appearance of a world outside and the appearance of a world inside. Creation is the exercise of this power in perception.

The Advaitic God or *Īśwara* is not to be understood in an external way as a *real God*, existing prior to His creation. He is a *functional God*. If creation, then God. What exists prior to the creation is the unqualified Brahman. It is the only entity absolutely untouched by *māyā*. It does nothing and creates nothing. The Creator-God functions with *māyā* and is relative to His creation. He too can be found within us; for creation takes place nowhere else except in the Self. Whether we admit a God in the traditional sense with complete power and complete knowledge or whether we do not is immaterial. Such a God is necessary for religion. He is not necessary for philosophy. What we cannot deny is the fact of creation of a world; and this fact can only be understood in terms of our erroneous experience. There is no other way in which the mystery of creation can be solved.

We conclude that the hypothesis of the Creator-God is not essential to Advaita Vedanta. It can be dispensed with. There is quite a good sense in which I create my own God and all His works. They are part of my universe, and I am the centre of that universe. This view may technically be called *eka-jīva-vāda*, according to which one individual or centre of experience is quite sufficient to explain all the facts of experience so far as Advaita Vedanta is concerned.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CONCEPT OF *AJÑĀNA* OR IGNORANCE

Māyā is the ultimate creative principle. It may be equated with *ajñāna* or it may be distinguished from it. If it is distinguished, as is often done, we have two distinct concepts. We have already considered the concept of *māyā*. We need to consider here the concept of *ajñāna*.

Ajñāna or ignorance is taken to be the ultimate term in any explanation of the world. The world may be illusorily created. But the activity of such creation cannot take place without prior ignorance. This ignorance, the presupposition of error, does not arise. It is something static and beginning-less. Error does arise. We can go beyond error to ignorance. No ignorance, no error. We cannot go beyond ignorance to something else as its cause. The only way to remove error completely is to remove its cause,—ignorance of that reality which makes error possible. To remove ignorance, all we need is knowledge.

We are ignorant of many things in life. Our knowledge is small, our ignorance is vast. But behind all those different forms of ignorance, there is one pervasive and primary ignorance. It is the ignorance of Brahman. It has meta-physical significance. Philosophy is primarily concerned with the removal of this ignorance, even as science and other empiri-cal disciplines are concerned with the removal of secondary ignorance or ignorance about empirical matters. Can we doubt that philosophy is genuine knowledge on the analogy of the sciences? Only the problems are different.

(a) Our ignorance of Brahman persists through-out our life. It forms the general background of all other knowledge. Our knowledge of the world, however far it is carried, has no

tendency to remove this ignorance. Rather it has a tendency to confirm it. For the world which we empirically know is a *product* of the ignorance in question. No ignorance, no world to study. Thus all our knowledge *implies* the fact of this primary and ultimate ignorance or ignorance of Brahman. Once this is removed, there is no world and nothing left to be known. It is in this sense that we must understand the statement that Advaitism gives the knowledge of that "knowing which all else is known". When Brahman is known, there is no world left to be known.

We know the world in direct sensible perception, and believe in the world. This knowledge, if it is not true, cannot be cancelled by any kind of *indirect* or *inferential* knowledge of Brahman. This species of knowledge is naturally weak. What we need for the cancellation in question is a direct, immediate and non-sensible awareness of Brahman which is more certain than perceptual knowledge in the best of circumstances. This is quite possible, because sensible perception is not direct enough. It is, in an important sense, mediated knowledge. What will remove the ignorance of Brahman for good and cancel all other knowledge is an absolutely direct intellectual intuiton called *aparokṣānubhûti*. This is the only desideratum of Advaita Vedanta.

(b) Coming back to a consideration of the nature of *ajñāna,* we find that it is not mere absence (*abhāva*) of knowledge. It is not something negative. Knowledge of the negation of anything implies knowledge of the thing negated. If I have a knowledge of the negation of x, then I must know x. If then ignorance is the same thing as negation of knowledge, we cannot be aware of ignorance without that very knowledge of the thing which contradicts ignorance. Ignorance is therefore something positive or *bhāvarūpa*.

(c) It is also evident that ignorance must have some object. Ignorance of x is not the same thing as ignorance of y. Knowledge of x will only remove the former, not the latter. Ignorance is thus as diversified as there are objects.

There is no such thing as one common and general ignorance. It is defined by its particular object. Ignorance of what is in your mind is different from ignorance of what is in your pocket. This object of ignorance however is not known through any accepted method of knowledge or *pramāṇa*. If it were thus known, it could not be an object of ignorance. At the same time, we cannot deny *all* knowledge of it. There is contradiction between ignorance and "knowledge in the ordinary sense or *pramāṇa*-knowledge". We cannot at the same time know and be ignorant. But there is no contradiction between ignorance of an object and "knowledge of the object at a different or higher level". As a matter of fact, if I did not know the object *at all,* I could not relate it to my ignorance in order to specify this ignorance. Ignorance of what is in your mind is different from ignorance of what is written on a particular page of a book, and both again are different from ignorance of what is going on in *Mars*. Because I recognise the objects as different, I can adopt different methods in order to remove the corresponding ignorance.

(d) The question naturally arises, can we *define* the object of ignorance? If we can define it, we are not ignorant of it. If we cannot define it, we cannot answer the question,—ignorant of what? There is a sense in which the object of ignorance is for us essentially *indefinite*. Let us take a concrete example. I am ignorant of the contents of your pocket. Here I know certain things quite well and definitely. I know yourself standing in front of me, and I also see the pocket of your coat. So far there is no ignorance. But there is ignorance beyond what I can see or know definitely. This 'beyond' is for me the object of ignorance, and it cannot be defined. It is the *unknown x* which can stand for anything within the limits of the bulge of the pocket. This 'indefinite' I certainly know, but I know it as indefinite. I cannot therefore possibly know it through any recognised method of knowledge, which is competent to know reality only as definite or as it is in itself. To be sure, the *object* of ignorance is not something *indefinite in itself*. It is something definite,—a pin or a coin, etc. Ignorance relates to this pin or the coin, not to some-

thing indefinite. When therefore we know the pin, we say, "we were ignorant of that pin." We can therefore legitimately say that we are ignorant of *the very thing* of which we later have knowledge. In other words, the object of ignorance and the object of the later knowledge which dissipates that ignorance is the same.

(e) It is important here to note that ignorance, like knowledge, cannot itself be known through any ordinary method of knowledge. They are both known to the pure intelligence called *sākṣi.* An act of knowledge is not known through another act of knowledge simultaneously. It is revealed by the higher intelligence. The same is true of ignorance. We do not know ignorance through an act of the mind or through the intellect. To know ignorance intellectually we must also know its object, which will dissolve the ignorance. Similarly, prior ignorance, when no act of the mind is possible, cannot be known intellectually. This is also the case with the state of ignorance called deep sleep. What reveals ignorance in all these cases is pure intelligence. This intelligence knows both ignorance and knowledge together with their objects. But if that is so, it knows all objects,—some as the objects of ignorance and therefore *as unknown,* and others as objects of knowledge and therefore *as* known. There is nothing beyond the reach of pure intelligence.

Ignorance is known and it is known as something *positive.* It is in this respect comparable to darkness. Darkness is something that exists in the absence of light and is incompatible with light. And yet it is not merely the absence of light. Absence cannot be perceived, but we do perceive darkness as we perceive light. Both ignorance and darkness are in this sense positive.

(f) Ignorance of Brahman is called *mûl-avidyā.* It is distinguished from secondary ignorance or *tûl-avidyā.* The latter relates to the common objects of experience. It has its support (*āśraya*) in the individual and it relates to objects

(*viṣaya*) in the world outside. *Mûl-avidyā* is different in this respect. Both the individual and the world are products of this ignorance. They come later. They can supply neither the support nor the object of the ignorance in question. The only thing that can be its support is Brahman, and the only thing that can be its object is Brahman. This amounts to saying that if any-one is ignorant it is Brahman, and He can only be ignorant of His own true nature.

(g) Ignorance cannot be final. It demands to be transcended or removed; and it is removed only by knowledge. Knowledge, however, can in a sense be final. It cannot be removed by ignorance. Once knowledge is there, ignorance is dissipated for ever. It cannot return or supervene upon knowledge. Knowledge keeps out ignorance even as the sun keeps out darkness. After knowledge then there is nothing. After knowledge there is perfect freedom, the freedom of truth.

It must however be admitted that although knowledge cannot be superseded by ignorance, there is a sense in which knowledge itself is transcended. All knowledge is an affair of the intellect. But the intellect is only a part of the non-intelligent universe created by ignorance. If ignorance goes, all its effects must go with it. In other words, knowledge not only dissolves ignorance, but it also dissolves itself as the end-product of ignorance. When knowledge arises, it leaves nothing standing except Brahman. There is no dualism any more. We thus find that ignorance hides the truth, distorts it by super-imposing a world upon it, and finally abolishes the whole illusory appearance through one of its own products, namely knowledge.

So far we have defined the general nature of ignorance. We shall now state the arguments for the view that ignorance is the ultimate cause of the illusory world-appearance, and then give our own comments upon the subject. The arguments may be summarised as follows: (1) Advaita Vedanta has absolute reality on one side and illusory appearances on the other. The latter cannot be explained by the former.

The only cause we can find for these appearances is ignorance. It is the pervasive cause of all illusions, and may therefore be described as their *material cause*. Illusions are made of the stuff of ignorance. (2) Error arises and can in a way be traced to ignorance which invariably precedes it. Ignorance does not arise and cannot be traced to anything beyond itself. It presupposes nothing and is caused by nothing. It is by its very nature beginningless. Our search for a cause must stop with it. (3) Illusion of a world is in a sense beginningless also. There is no such thing as a *first perception* of an illusory world. To perceive something illusory I must have perceived it before. It is only because I have once perceived a snake that I can super-impose it in the wrong place and create an illusion of it. The illusion of the world is in this sense serially beginningless (*pravāhānādi*). To perceive any object in the world, I must have perceived the class of that object before. (4) In the beginningless ignorance, all kinds of illusions can arise and do arise. These illusions are like a dream, and the ignorance (*mûlavidyā*) in which they occur is like sleep. When we wake up from the sleep of ignorance, the dream is terminated with it.

We shall now make some critical remarks to supplement this view and also to define our exact position with regard to the relation of *ajñāna* (ignorance) and māyā (illusion): (a) It is quite evident that ignorance of a thing is not a *sufficient reason* for misperceiving it. Error is not contained in ignorance and cannot be deduced from it. Error, like ignorance, is not *caused* by anything beyond it and is quite *inexplicable*. Ignorance is only a negative cause of error. We can no doubt say, "if error, then prior ignorance". But we cannot say, "if ignorance, then error". There is no rational transition from pure ignorance to error. Error is essentially irrational, and nothing can possibly explain it. We have merely to recognise it and thereby become free from it.

(b) Let us suppose that ignorance is never *pure*, and that it is already *potent with error*. But then do we not incorporate the power of error into ignorance and make ig-

norance *as such* only a partial explanation of the world-illusion? If the seed of error is always present in the positive constitution of ignorance, *ajñāna* ceases to be different from *māyā*.

(c) Philosophically speaking, the concept of *māyā* is more important as a principle of explanation. Ignorance of Brahman (*mûlavidyā*) is not an original datum to any-one. The original datum is the appearance of a sensible world. All persons of whatever philosophical persuasion perceive a world and can have a problem of truth about their perceptions. This problem of truth is common to all mankind, and it should be possible to solve it on the basis of our experience and through a certain analysis of it. This analysis can show that all our perceptual knowledge is erroneous and all its objects illusory. This brings in the concept of *māyā* as the ultimate explanation of the appearance of a world, and it can also point a way to truth, the way of negation. If the object is illusory, what about the subjective act of cognising it? Is not that illusory also? We may thus be led, through the negation of both the subject and the object, to the absolute truth which is the ultimate ground of the subject-object illusion. This is the absolute subject or *ātman*. The whole method is rational and philosophical.

This cannot be said about the concept of *ajñāna*, except at the lower and empirical stage. Ignorance of Brahman is not a fact of common and uninstructed experience. Only those who accept scriptural testimony can have any problem about it. It is not literally a philosophical problem. It is more of the nature of a theological problem. That this theological problem coalesces with the philosophical problem of truth is true. But we can still recognise which of the two concepts comes nearer to a philosophical understanding of the facts of experience.

(d) Our bondage stems not so much from our ignorance of Brahman as from our perception of difference. Ignorance of Brahman is no datum to us, perception of differences is. If we knew no differences, we should have no problems,

theoretical or practical. Even ignorance of Brahman becomes a problem when we supply the appropriate object to it and thus *distinguish* this form of ignorance from other forms. In other words, perception of difference is our principal bondage and the source of all our problems, not ignorance as such. We want to be free from illusions of all kinds, not ignorance,—unless ignorance itself constitutes one of our illusions.

(e) Ignorance of Brahman is not ordinarily experienceable. It is experienceable only when we degrade Brahman to one of the many objects. We can easily distinguish ignorance of x from ignorance of y, because x and y are naturally different. Brahman is not naturally different from anything. It is non-dualistic by its very nature. It is the Infinite. How can the Infinite be *distinguished from the finite*? But if that is so, ignorance of Brahman is an artificial and illusory datum. We need not be afraid of ignorance of Brahman *as such*. Ignorance of Brahman will coincide with Brahman. It will be no possible object of experience to us and will offer no problem. We first commit an error, degrade Brahman, and then have a meaning for the ignorance of Brahman. Illusion is thus at the bottom of all those concepts, including ignorance, which offer a problem. First illusion, then truth.

(f) It may here be said that we have over-simplified the problem of ignorance, and in the process misinterpreted our experience. We can be said to have an original experience of the ignorance of Brahman, unrelated to any perception of duality. This ignorance can therefore be said to precede all our knowledge of a world, whether positive or negative. The prototype of this original experience is to be found in the state of deep sleep. Here admittedly we are ignorant of any kind of a world. It is ignorance pure and simple. Ignorance of Brahman is just like that. It precedes the perception of a world, just as sleep precedes wakefulness. The awareness of this ignorance is not an intellectual affair,—it is an affair of a pure intelligence beyond the intellect. Our perception of a world follows this original ignorance as wakefulness follows

sleep. We can say of this ignorance of Brahman that it resides in Brahman and 'hides the face of Brahman'.

The analogy is revealing. We do not know sleep in the state of sleep. It is no sleep to us in any sense. If this sleep is made beginningless, it can be no possible object of experience to us. We know sleep because it is a break in the continuity of wakefulness or a gap between one state of wakefulness and another. Again, we know sleep as an object; and it is an object, because it is *necessarily related* to wakefulness. We know sleep when we wake up, and then we know it as *that from which we wake up.* This is our *only* experience of sleep as a state. Sleep, minus its relativity, will be no object of experience at all. The same applies to primary ignorance. All our experience of ignorance is relative. It is relative to knowledge. We know ignorance as *prior ignorance;* and prior ignorance can only be known on the rise of kowledge, and as related to knowledge. We also know ignorance as correlative to knowledge,—*x* we know, *not-x* we do not. *This much* we know, *beyond this* we do not. We cannot claim that we have any awareness of ignorance purely as such or as unrelated to knowledge. But then it falls under the category of illusory awareness. Ignorance becomes a problem when it is perceived in one of the above-mentioned ways. If it is not so perceived but exists nevertheless, it can be no problem to anybody. We do not mind if it continues eternally that way. We shall be blissfully ignorant of such ignorance, and can welcome it quite as well as the bliss of Brahman. We need to view the matter in its *logical form* and not merely as a question of *history.* Even history must take shape in our present thinking, or it is no history at all. How does ignorance take shape and become cognisable by thought! It is there that our problem begins.

(g) Ignorance of Brahman is a sophisticated problem based upon a knowledge of Brahman through the scriptures. But in order to resolve that problem, we cannot turn to the scripture; we must turn to our common experience. If nothing were illusory there, we should not know how to

remove our ignorance. It is because we can show that our perception of a world is a case of erroneous knowledge and that truth lies beyond that world as the ground of the world, that we have both a real problem and a method of resolving that problem. It is the method of negation. *The possibility of a direct knowledge of Brahman is based upon an original misperception of Brahman, and not upon an original ignorance of Brahman.* This ignorance is a dogma, the misperception is a fact; and because it is a fact, it opens the way to direct knowledge. *What we directly misperceive, we can also directly perceive as it is.* It is from illusion to truth, not from ignorance to truth. It is the illusion of a world that is our undoing, not ignorance. We can ignore the latter, we cannot ignore the former; for all evil comes from the perception of duality, not from the non-perception of non-duality.

(h) The error of perceiving a world is error no doubt, but we can go beyond it. We can argue our helplessness in the matter. Everyone, constituted as we are, perceives a world; and when we have negated the world, we have no direct and full awareness of the underlying truth. To perceive a world, we must have already committed *a more fundamental error*. This is the error of confusing our real Self with the not-Self or the body in its various forms, both gross and subtle. This error is the source of all other errors. It is the primary ignorance. All evil flows from it. At the same time, it opens the way to direct knowledge of the truth. Discrimination and negation applied here can carry us right to the knowledge of the Self. For the Self and the not-Self are opposed to each other like light and darkness, and the Self is by its very nature immediate and direct (*pṛtyak*). As the physical body and the subtler sheaths of the human personality are progressively negated, the Self becomes more and more internal to us,—pure, pervasive and infinite. In the end it is known as Brahman itself.

Ajñāna with its two powers of covering up and distorting can be equated with *māyā*. It is then the ultimate principle of explanation. The error lies in dissociating these two powers, and making one of them the cause of the other.

CHAPTER XXXIV

REASONS FOR THE ILLUSORINESS OF THE WORLD

Something is finally and completely proved to be illusory when it is perceived to be so. After such perception no further proof is demanded. But before it, a proof is certainly needed. This proof should be strong enough to convince reason.

Nobody perceives anything to be illusory, to start with. To start with, things are perceived to be real. It is only when the cancelling knowledge arises that a thing is perceived to be illusory. In the case of the world as a whole, no cancelling knowledge in the ordinary sense is possible. Knowledge of a higher super-sensible reality alone can cancel our present knowledge of the world. That knowledge is *not yet.* It is our desideratum. It can only arise as a result of an intensive intellectual and spiritual endeavour. In the meantime, we have to depend upon certain general reasons by way of proof, remembering that direct knowledge is the only ultimate and convincing evidence in the matter.

The evidence of our common perceptions of things is always questionable. Perception, to begin with, is neutral as to its truth or falsehood. It has only a claim to truth, which may be subsequently validated or not. To perceive is not necessarily to perceive truly. The illusory is also, at least before its cancellation, said to be perceived. If subsequent knowledge is confirmatory, we say the perception is true; if it is otherwise, we say it is false. No perception is *known* to be true or false *by its own evidence.* No argument can therefore be based about the reality of the world on the evidence of perception itself. Even the process of confirmation, carried on endlessly, will not decide the matter finally. What

is needed is a new species of knowledge which is not open to cancellation. Is there any such knowledge with respect to the world? Evidently not. The world is defined by what we perceive and what is continuous with what we perceive. What is no object of perception, actual or possible, can be no part of the world; it is nothing at all.

If perception does not contain any *reason* for the truth of that which is perceived, does it contain any reason for the falsity of the same? However we answer this question, one thing is quite certain: the truth of a perception cannot be final, but the falsity of it can be final. Once a perception is cancelled, its claim to truth is shattered for ever. It can never be reinstated. Or what is the same thing, the perception of a thing as true is quite consistent with its later perception as illusory; but the later perception of a thing as illusory is not consistent with a still later perception that it is true. All corrective knowledge is in the direction of proving falsity, never proving truth. Once an error is detected, it stays on and becomes final. To cancel error itself, we must transcend it; and we can transcend it only through a higher species of knowledge which is not itself open to cancellation. It is only in this sense that truth can be said to supersede error and to be final.

It may be said here: "We only know one perception cancelling another perception. If that is so, truth at the perceptual level has got to be accepted at some point or other. In general, the cancelling perception is true". This argument is not wholly correct; for the truth of the cancelling perception is provisional only, while the disillusionment which it has wrought is permanent. We cannot go back on the cancellation and begin to feel that the original perception or something like it might after all be true. Once perception has been discredited as a method of knowledge, it cannot be the same thing again. It has got to be rejected as false and so unreliable. Accordingly, reasons for proving the illusoriness of all objects of perception have a value; but reasons for proving their truth are not even available.

We shall now proceed to give some reasons for the illusoriness of the world. (1) The most important argument is based upon perception itself. "The world is illusory, because it is perceived (*dṛśyatvāt mithyā*)." This may appear to be no reason at all, or just the wrong reason; for most people, including philosophers, take their cue from common-sense, and regard the world as real just because it is perceived. Against this, it can be argued that the reality of anything that is perceived, e.g., a pot, is just the point at issue. It is not admitted by both the sides in the dispute. What is admitted by both the sides is the illusory character of certain objects said to be perceived, e.g., the rope-snake. The rope-snake is both perceived and taken to be real; and yet it is not real, but illusory only. It has therefore a logical significance in the argument which the disputed pot cannot claim. Our agreements can be, and must be, used to settle our disagreements. There is no other logical way. When therefore Vedanta goes from perception to the illusoriness of its object, the logic of it is quite flawless. It is no doubt going counter to common-sense. But common-sense is unreflective. It cannot set the standard of truth to philosophy. Unless the inner structure of a true perception is different from the inner structure of a false perception, there is no sense in distinguishing truth from falsehood in perception as such. We are bound to say that truth looks like falsehood and vice-versa. Either then all perception is true or all perception is false. There is no *via media*. Perception cannot be sometimes true and sometimes false, when internal evidence warrants neither the one nor the other. As a matter of fact, we have definite assurance of falsity in certain cases, but no assurance of truth even in a single case. The path of reason is clear. Epistemologically, the value of all perceptual knowledge is alike. The distinction of true and false *within perception* is provisional and practical only. In our search for real and ultimate truth, perceptual knowledge must be transcended; for it has proved deceptive. It is only a step beyond this, logically quite inevitable, to stigmatise all perception as illusory.

(2) It may now be said: "What is perceived may be illusory. But the reality behind what is perceived cannot be illusory. Shall we not suppose that there is a real world behind the illusory appearance of a world? So not every kind of world is illusory after all". Granting the truth of this argument, what will be the nature of the real world? Will it not be an objective world? But no object can be *in itself*. An *object-in-itself* is a contradiction in terms. An object is *to me*. It is necessarily relative to a subject. What is necessarily relative cannot be *in itself* and so real. We know that the illusory is necessarily relative to the subject that perceives it. All objects are *like that*. *Objectivity* is then the second reason for the illusoriness of any possible world (*viṣayatvātmithyā*).

(3) It is possible to argue that objects are not constructed or posited by the subject, but known for what they are. But then another form of relativity creeps into their structure. An object has a necessary reference beyond itself to other objects. If a thing is a stone, for instance, it can only be defined through its distinction from other objects such as wood, iron, etc. A stone is a stone only in so far as it refers to, and can be distinguished from, what is not a stone. In general, to say that something is x is to say that the something is different from what is *not* x. No object of the world has thus a nature of its own (*svarûpa*). It may be a 'bare that'. But a 'bare that' is as good as nothing. The moment we supply any content to it, we enter into the region of relativity, where nothing is in itself what it appears to be. The appearance can be analysed away into its relations without leaving any residue. The most unique thing known to us is still relative. Other things enter into its very structure. The world is in his sense *a mere appearance* without a nature of its own. The same is true of the illusory. Relativity is thus the third reason for the illusoriness of the world (*sāpekṣatvāt-mithyā*).

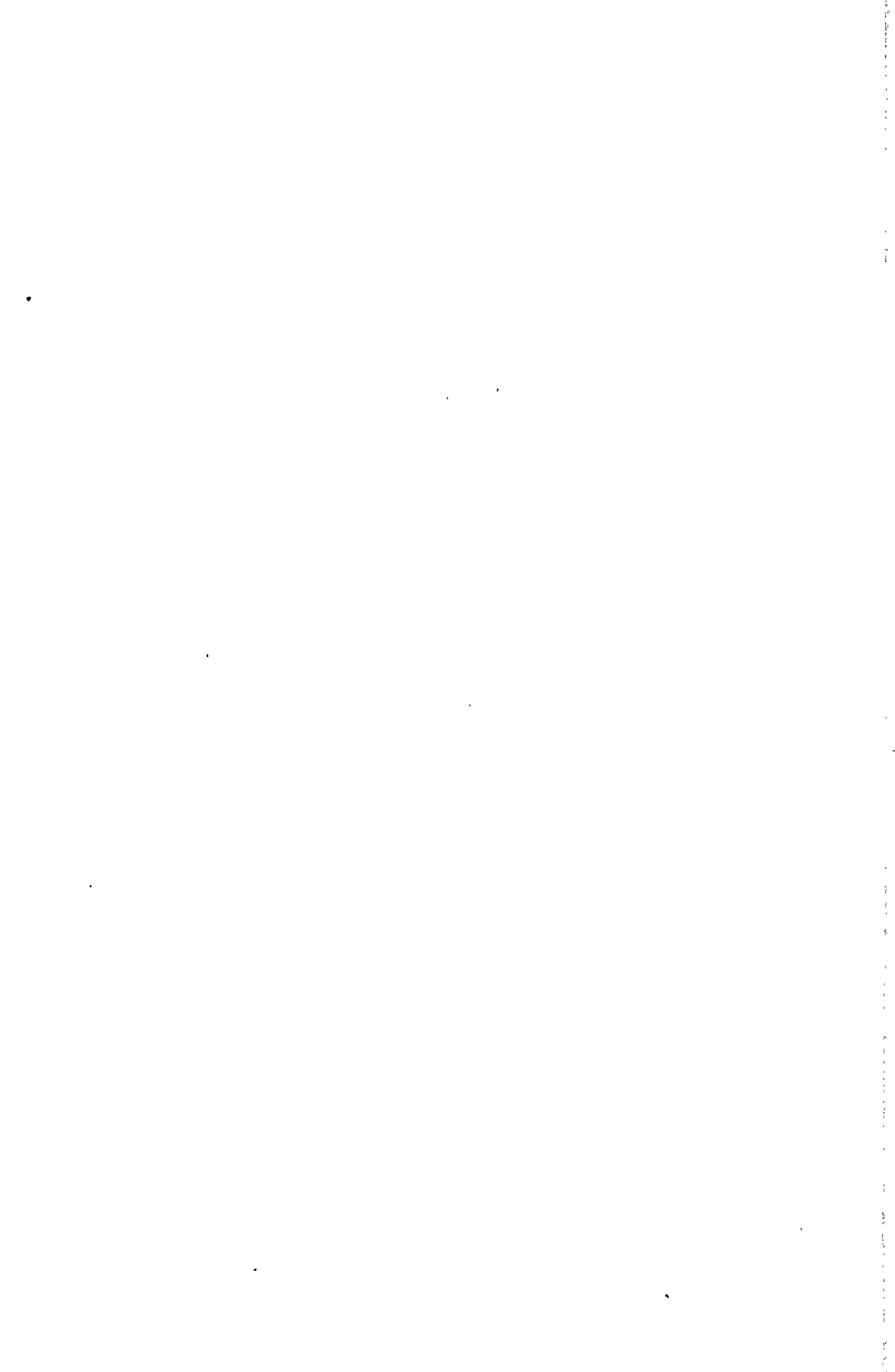
(4) It may now be said that the very relativity of things proves that they are something in themselves. Only a thing

that exists in itself can sustain a relation. But if that is so, things must exist and have a nature of their own. Only we fail to recognise that nature. Let it be so. But then what is that nature? Is it intelligent or non-intelligent? In the former case, all things would be like the Self; for the Self is the *only really intelligent* entity we know. All other things are intelligent in a borrowed sense. This means that the Self is the only ultimate reality, and that the so-called physical world is only an illusory appearance super-imposed upon it. The external world as a reality in itself is completely abolished. In the latter case, the own nature of things is unintelligent. It is like Kant's thing-in-itself, neither known by another nor known by itself. An unintelligent thing cannot know itself; and since it is also *in-itself,* it cannot be related to a subject and known by another. Either therefore an unintelligent thing-in-itself is nothing at all,—it cannot be proved to exist; or it is only an object to a subject, and so essentially relative like all illusory objects. This is the fourth reason for the illusoriness of the world,—*jaḍatvāt-mithyā* (non-intelligent, therefore illusory).

(5) We have already seen that the reality of *this* (*idam*) is incompatible with the reality of *I* (*aham*). If one of them is real, the other must be illusory. But the Self cannot be illusory, because it is the ground of the appearance and the being of the not-Self. This is so in the epistemological sphere. It is the same in the psychological sphere. In any analysis of the human personality, we find that the Self is confused with the not-Self in its various forms. When this confusion is resolved through discrimination, the Self alone remains. The not-Self has only a borrowed reality. The Self is thus the ultimate truth of the not-Self,—Brahman the truth of the world.

PART IV

EPISTEMOLOGY



CHAPTER XXXV

VEDANTIC IDEALISM OR *DṚṢṬI-SṚṢṬI-VĀDA*

Advaita Vedanta does not mince matters. It raises the rather unusual question, — do we perceive the world *because it is there*, or is the world there *because we perceive it?* In other words, does the world cause our perception of it, or does our perception cause the appearance of a world to us?

The natural and common-sense answer to make to this question is that the world exists prior to our perception of it and is the cause of it. Perception is a form of knowledge; and all knowledge is a revealing of that which exists prior to it and independently of it. Now there is no doubt that this definition of knowledge is quite unexceptionable. But it is by no means certain that perception is knowledge in this very literal sense. It is commonly accepted as a genuine and a very convincing mode of knowledge; but this can be questioned.

Let us suppose that physical objects which are perceived exist in themselves prior to such perception. But will they exist exactly in the form in which they are later perceived? Kant at least thought otherwise. For him, the thing-in-itself was different from the thing as it appeared in our sensibility. Since we cannot correlate the known with the unknown, the very possibility of any evidence to prove the identity of the two is ruled out. What we can definitely assert is that what we know is relative to our instruments and methods of knowledge, and what we do not know is relative to nothing and no definite statement can be made about its nature. Is it *this, that* or *the other* thing, or is it nothing at all? We should prefer to say that it is as good as nothing. Things that are not related to intelligence in any form or at any level are indistinguishable from things that do not exist at all. To

accept their existence is to accept a dogma; not to accept their existence is to undermine the possibility of all knowledge, even illusory knowledge. We shall therefore suppose that something certainly exists *in-itself* and is in some sense known; at the same time, it is *different from* what is perceived by us and is necessarily relative to our perception of it.

The realistic view of knowledge comes up against another difficulty. Let us suppose that there are physical objects on one side and intelligence on the other. Since they are two distinct and self-existing entities, they can only have an external relation to each other. But then how will they come together in any kind of *unity?* How will knowledge arise at all? If A and B have an external relation, they will be exactly after the relation what they were before it. So far as they are concerned, the relation might as well have not occurred at all. How will the subject then *begin to know?* In order that it should begin to know, it must somehow be *affected.* But if it is affected, it just becomes a different subject. It cannot hold up the object while it itself remains the same. Only an unaffected and pure intelligence can be competent to know, not an intelligence that is modified by the object. The subject that is ignorant is the subject that knows. This subject must be self-identical in the two states of ignorance and knowledge. Our theory must reconcile the purity of intelligence with the reflection of the object in it.

We have so far taken for granted that the two terms in the knowledge-relation, physical objects on one side and pure intelligence on the other, are distinct entities that can exist side by side and also be related. But pure intelligence is not a thing that can be *distinguished* from some other thing or known in the objective attitude. It has no kind of limitation which an object has. All limitations are within it and revealed by it. How can it be treated as a thing among things or externally related to anything whatsoever? It is the unlimited ground of all limitations. Such intelligence cannot be kept distinct from its objects. As a matter of fact, the distinct can never know the distinct, or one object another

object. The intelligence must therefore be, in an important sense, non-distinct from its objects. In other words, there must be a relation of identity between pure intelligence and its objects, and this identity must be a false identity. It is the relation that is found between the ground and the illusory appearance.

It is true that we distinguish the object from the subject, and vice-versa. But the subject that is thus distinguished is not the true subject. It is the finite subject or the subject as characterised by an act of thought. The true subject is pure intelligence. It cannot be characterised. It is no doubt individualised through the psycho-physical organism. But it is only through ignorance and error that this individualisation itself takes place.

We have thrown some doubt so far on the commonsense view of knowledge. But Advaita Vedanta itself seeks to meet common-sense half-way. It has a school of thought which accepts *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda,* —the world, therefore the perception. According to this view, the world is indeed illusory. There is no running away from that conclusion, so far as Advaitism is concerned. But this illusion is not created by the individual, as is the rope-snake for instance. The world is created by a universal consciousness called God or *Īśvara*. God may here be defined as the universal spirit that operates with the power of *avidyā* or ignorance. As the effect of this power, the world is quite illusory. Ignorance can only create illusions, never a real thing. But how can ignorance create a world at all? Here we have the example of deep sleep. In deep sleep we are in a state of complete ignorance. Yet this ignorance is potent with inner and unconscious stirrings (*saṁskāras*). It is these stirrigs that give rise to all sorts of dreams and finally wake us up. The universal spirit creates a world out of ignorance in the same way. It does not say to itself, "Let there be light, etc." To do that, the mind at least must already be in existence; and if God has a mind, He is an individual of a sort. How can we argue that all other individuals are created, but the first individual is not created? Individuality

is a limitation; and every finite or limited thing is created. This leaves only the universal spirit as the uncreated ground. Ignorance itself is not created. It is the principle of creation. But then it is itself illusory, having no kind of being or function without its relation to the universal spirit. However that be, the universal spirit creates the world and creates the individuals in it. The individual accordingly does not create the world. He merely finds it, just as common-sense would have us believe. The world causes our perception of it. The world is quite real for us as far as it goes; but it is ultimately illusory, being a product of ignorance. Since the mind is a later product, the creation may be said to take place through a non-mental upsurge or what may be called *nirvikalpa-vṛtti*. The reason for the upsurge is contained in ignorance itself, which is potent with the seed of the world to be created. There is no *first creation*. There is only a beginningless series of creations.

This view is open to certain objections. (a) The universal consciousness or God is conceived as distant, objective and transcendent to us. This is good theism, it is not Advaita Vedanta. The essence of the latter consists in bringing the universal consciousness nearer and finding it within man. If there is a Creator, we must find Him there. If there is a creation by Him, we must study the process as we find it there. Vedanta makes theism consistent and meaningful. It corrects the theologians who sacrifice meaning to a dogma.

(b) God or Īśvara is supposed to function with *avidyā* in the creation of the world. We cannot suppose that God acts as in a sleep. If He did, that would be an unconscious creation, not worthy of God. An intelligent being can only function with thought or with will. But these are supposed to be products of *avidyā*. How does avidyā function then in the creation of thought and will? It is supposed to function by a sort of *nirvikalpa vṛtti* or actless act. We understand a *vṛtti* or act in the sense of an intelligent act; and an intelligent act implies thought in some form or other. Only a conscious act or a will-act can create. A pure act or an act-

less act cannot create,—it will be just indistinguishable from *being*. A Creator must *think* or *imagine* or *will*—and all these activities are supposed to be products of *avidyā*.

(c) Is the world illusory to the universal consciousness or not? In the former case, the world is created by the universal consciousness as all illusions are created, i.e. by the power of erroneous perception. God becomes only another erring individual. There is nothing divine about creation. In the latter case, i.e. if the world is not illusory but real to God, can it be said to be created by Him at all? Can the real be created? The creations of the will or of the imagination can have no being in themselves; but if they still appear to have such being, it can only be illusory being. We gain nothing by transferring creation from the individual to God.

(d) It is possible to argue that God is the controller and the master of a mysterious power which can create the illusion of a world for us only, but which is no illusion to Him. But then will this be morally justifiable for a person like God? Again, can one intelligent being create an illusion for another? If he can, the creation will not be a product of error or ignorance, but of a positive and a great power possessed by him. How can such creation be illusory, and how can the individual annul it? So far as the individual is concerned, God is real, His creations are real and he himself is real. This may be a good form of theism, but it is not Advaita Vedanta. There appears to be no place for *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda* in the latter system.

Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda is the only view consistent with Advaitism, and it is pure unadulterated Idealism. If the world is illusory at all, it is illusory to the person who perceives it; and it is created by no other agency than his perception. By *dṛṣṭi* we mean perception and all those forms of empirical knowledge which are based upon perception. By *sṛṣṭi* we mean what is brought into being or created.

The best way of understanding *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* is on the analogy of dreams. In dreams, a world is perceived and it is

taken to be real; and yet there is no real world out there. We seem to be using our senses and perceiving an already existing world; and yet the senses are no less imaginary than their objects. We perceive certain things to be time-honoured and ancient, and yet they are no more than products of the perception in question. We seem to have memories too; and those memories create the past time in which their objects are placed. In fact nothing is real,—time, space, substance, etc., are all creations of the thinking that occurs in dreams. Just in the same way, we can understand our whole life itself as a profounder dream from which we only wake up when we wake up to the ultimate truth. Our ordinary dreams which are broken every day are only dreams within a longer dream. Our ignorance of Brahman is a kind of sleep. Within this sleep is the dream of a world, with all its varied forms of being. When we wake up from this primal slumber to the sun of Truth, we shall be disturbed by dreams and nightmares no longer. We shall know the Truth and become the Truth.

Our perceptions create illusions in two different ways,—in ordinary waking life and in dreams. In ordinary waking life, something is supposed to be really out there which is misperceived. Here the illusory is created by a false superimposition upon the real. This view of the creation of the illusory is accepted by Advaitism in-so-far as it brings out the need of an underlying reality (*adhiṣṭhāna*), which constitutes the element of truth in an erroneous perception. But since the ultimate ground of truth in the apparent and visible world is not something *out there*,—a kind of thing-in-itself on the Kantian pattern,—but the inmost Self or *ātman* of the percipient himself, this account of the creation of the illusory is not wholly satisfactory. The creativity in dreams avoids this error. The *ātman* is the real ground and support of the dreamer-self, his dreaming and his entire dream-world. This is therefore the best way of understanding the creation of an illusory world in Advaita Vedanta. Perception does not create its object as something *later in time*. There is no time-lapse between the two. It will not therefore be correct to say,—if

perception, then object. It will be more correct to say,—perception *is* the object (*dṛṣṭireva-sṛṣṭiḥ*). To perceive *is* to create, as in dreams.

It is now argued that this idealistic position is equally open to objections. (a) If every-one creates his own world, what accounts for the common world? We communicate with each other on the basis of a common world; and a common world must be independent of what the individuals themselves create. Our answer is that this agreement about a common world is true for practical purposes only. If we enquire into the theoretical basis of this agreement, there is none. After all, each individual perceives a world of his own, and there is no means of comparing what he perceives with what others are supposed to do. Each individual is in fact a world unto himself. Other individuals and their agreement with him is part of this world. It is as in a dream. A real world and real individuals cannot be proved.

(b) There is recognition that the thing I now see is the very thing I saw a moment before. There must therefore be a permanent thing outside which I perceive at different times. The same is true of the world as a whole. Our answer is that our recognition of sameness or permanence does not prove real sameness or real permanence. Even when things are not the same, we do so perceive them, as science can easily show. Things are continually changing, but we do not see the change. Our perception of identity is all there is. It does not reveal real identity or prove it. As a matter of fact, the knowledge of the identity of an object is, by the very nature of the case, an impossibility. An object is just as it is perceived to be at the moment of its perception. There is no known method, apart from our *subjective impression,* of knowing the objective unity or identity of what is perceived at different moments. There is no recognition of an *inner unity* as in the case of our true Self. All objective identity is fictitious only.

(c) There is a certain regularity and uniformity operating in nature. Nature is governed by some kind of law. No-

one can change the order of nature at will. How can the individual be said to create this order? It is just the opposite. The individual merely seeks to study it. Our answer is that even a dream has an order of its own. If it had none, we could not *believe* in the dream-world. That there is this belief is evidence that there can be an objective order that is purely imaginary. Since we do not consciously or willfully create this order, the question, "why is the order such and not different?" is an illegitimate question. If I consciously imagine anything, there is a reason why I imagine it so. I can also be persuaded to imagine differently. But where the imagination is unconscious and under the spell of ignorance, no reason can be given and no reason will be a fit reason. Perhaps the imagination is prompted by desire (*vāsanā*), and desire is always irrational. As any realist must accept the given order for what it is without giving any explanation for it, so the Idealist is equally within his rights to accept the products of unconscious imagination and of ignorance just for what they are. If we can say,—'God has made it so', or 'nature has made it so' or 'Fate has made it so',—we can equally well say, 'ignorance has made it so', 'unconscious imagination has made it so', 'desire has made it so', etc. We can question neither God, nor Fate, nor Nature; why should we then question ignorance, error, desire, etc? The argument based upon law and order in nature is not inimical to *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda.*

(d) It is argued against *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* that it makes no distinction between true knowledge and false. The cancelling knowledge, which we regard as true, is itself to be understood as part of a dream. But if there is no true knowledge anywhere, can we prove any piece of knowledge to be false either? The very distinction of *true* and *false* with regard to knowledge becomes meaningless. There ought therefore to be some piece of knowledge which is true; and a true knowledge is that which is determined by an objective reality.

We now contend that the truth of the cancelling knowledge need not be absolute. There can be such a thing as

cancellation within a dream; and so the distinction of *true* and *false* can obtain within it. It is quite legitimate as far as it goes. It is only when we wake up from a dream that the distinction which we drew in the dream itself is wholly lost and becomes meaningless. In its place, we now draw the line differently. All the objects of the dream become *equally false,* and they are contrasted with the objects of waking life. In fact, we can go on dreaming and dreaming till a piece of knowledge occurs there which breaks the dream itself. This may be anything in our ordinary dreams,—we dream that somebody is kicking us, and we wake up with a start. In the case of the cosmic dream of ignorance, it can only be the saving knowledge of the identity of *jīva* and Brahman. This knowledge is not further open to cancellation (*abādhita*), and represents therefore the absolute truth. When we wake up to it, all so-called true knowledge becomes part of a dream which occurs in beginningless ignorance. In the ensuing enlightenment, we outgrow all distinctions, and among them the very distinction of *true* and *false.*

(e) It is argued that we must not interpret the higher in terms of the lower. Dreams are cancelled by wakefulness, wakefulness is not cancelled by dreams. There is here a difference of level. How can we degrade wakefulness to a dream, which it actually dissipates? Our answer is that we can reduce waking experience to dream-experience, if their internal structure is the same; but we cannot do the reverse. This reduction is quite logical, and it has the merit of raising our truth-values to a higher level. Truth must not look like falsehood. It must be qualitatively different. It must be self-evidently true. Empirical knowledge cannot have this quality.

(f) The view under discussion is ego-centric. There is only one self, and that self is my self. But nobody can reasonably give pre-eminence to his own self. He is only one among many, and he knows it. Inter-subjective intercourse would not be possible without a plurality of selfs. Now we do not deny the reality of other individuals at the practical level.

We also do not deny a sort of direct apprehension of the person spoken to or 'you'. But it is not a genuine knowledge of *selfhood.* We do not possess two intuitions of self-hood, one appropriate to *my* self and the other appropriate to *your* self. My self and your self are specialised formations of one universal Self. There is only one intuition of this universal Self, and it is indicated only by the use of the term 'I', never by the use of the term 'you'. Indeed the term 'I' also stands for a certain form, called the 'I-form or *ahaṅkāra*'. But while we can legitimately claim that 'you' is nothing but the 'you-form', we cannot legitimately claim that 'I' too is nothing but the 'I-form or *ahaṅkāra*'. When the 'I-form' is negated, the real substantival Self remains. It has no qualities and no relations. It is not an exclusive entity which can be objectively contemplated. Its great peculiarity is that it is only to be found in the relation of identity with the *I-form;* and when this form is negated, the last vestige of objectivity is negated, and we are face to face with the absolute truth, which we cannot accommodate in our objective categories and forms of thought. We can therefore legitimately claim that the real self is the universal Self, and this Self is indicated and symbolised by 'I' alone, never by 'you'.

There is another interesting fact to be noted in this connection. The centrality of 'I' is beyond dispute. It is from 'I' that we go to 'you'. If 'I', then 'you'. 'You' are something to *me.* Knowing my self, I know all things beside my self. My self is at the centre of my world. It is possible to say, I dream and the world stands up to me. 'You' is only a part of that world, not the centre of it. Logically therefore there is only *one dreamer,*—and he is the person who is philosophising. Other individuals are only part of his dream. There is no standpoint available from which we can talk of more than *one dreamer.* This is technically called *eka-jīva-vāda,* the view that one individual alone creates, and he is no other than my self.

(g) We have said that all those things which are perceived are created by the perception of it. But what about

those things which are not perceived or which are prior to perception? Are they therefore real in themselves? If they are real, Advaitism is refuted. If they are not, what is the ground of their illusoriness? Evidently, things that are not perceived can be as illusory as things that are. *Mûlāvidyā* is not perceived. It is the *presupposition* of perception. It is that beginningless sleep which contains our dream of a world. Here *dṛṣṭi* comes later. Ignorance is prior to it. Again, the relation of ignorance with Brahman is not perceived. It is presupposed by any creative activity. It too is beginningless. Similarly, *Iśvara* or qualified Brahman, *jīva* or the individual who dreams, and their distinction cannot be products of any perception. They are all beginningless. *Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* cannot apply to them. Yet they cannot be real. Is this not a limitation of Idealism?

We now contend that Idealism should be extended to all those entities which are necessarily grounded in pure intelligence and revealed by it. All the above-mentioned entities are so grounded. *Dṛṣṭi* here takes on a wider meaning. It is not restricted to intellection. It stands for "necessary relatedness to intelligence". Idealism can thus be made to comprehend all possible objects of knowledge. They are illusory, because they are known. No entity can elude pure intelligence. What is not in relation to pure intelligence is simply nothing at all. We cannot even speak of it as illusory.

A relevant question arises here: how does anything come to be known by pure intelligence? Can anything be an object known without the intervention of the intellect? An object known must have a *form;* and the intellect is the only instrument for apprehending *form.* If pure intelligence, not joined to the intellect, apprehends anything, it will just coincide with it and become indistinguishable from it. No object will emerge. Pure intelligence may be omniscient. It is related to everything and knows everything. But such knowledge is of no use to us. It is only when the intellect intervenes that we are said to know. Object means form; and the form

is only apprehended by the intellect. If that is so, *dṛṣṭi* in the restricted sense of intellection can cover all possible objects of knowledge that are illusory.

It is possible to argue, however, that we can go behind *dṛṣṭi* in this restricted sense. An act of the intellect is not itself known intellectually at the time; or as it is said, there is no *vṛtti* of *vṛtti*. But if this act can be known directly by pure intelligence without the intervention of the intellect, the thesis that all knowledge is intellectual cannot be sustained. Things can also be known differently, i.e., directly by pure intelligence or *sākṣi*. But it is also possible to argue that this knowledge by identity is no knowledge at all. If the subject coincides with the object and becomes indistinguishable from it, the object simply does not emerge. The rise of knowledge cannot be distinguished from the absence of knowledge. It is in the distinction of the object from the subject that knowledge arises; and this distinction is the function of the intellect. All our knowledge is dominated by the intellect. Take away the intellect wholly and completely, and objectivity in all its forms disappears with it.

There is nothing outside Brahman that is not capable of being explained on the basis of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* if we apply the theory consistently and thoroughly. The Great Dream that we are dreaming does not include merely the world outside of us; it also includes our individualised existence, the causal ignorance, and the very saving knowledge that dissolves this ignorance. When this dream goes, no problem is left on our hands. We are just free from the illusion of duality. *Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* is theoretically irrefutable.

CHAPTER XXXVI

BEYOND IDEALISM

We have put forward an extreme form of epistemological idealism called *subjective idealism.* This may appear to be grossly unfair to experience. After all, we can only find *truth* in our own experience; and we can only find it there, if our experience comprehends a larger reality which the individual does not create. The individual as a psychic centre is only one among many individuals; but as a rational being, he partakes of the life of reason, which is universal. If we must have idealism which does justice to the facts of experience, we must go beyond the psychic activity of the individual to a higher spiritual principle which has universal scope. This is reason or *buddhi.* An idealistic interpretation of reality is possible, not because reality is perceived by an individual, but because it reflects the structure of thought and is known by thought.

Reason is the divine spirit in man; and it is also the truth embodied by the world outside. What we truly know in things is their rational essence. Taking thought then in its super-individual aspect, we can say that reality is what is constructed by thought or posited by thought. Here we raise idealism to a higher level. We can say that reality is the correlative of thought. There can be no reality without thought, and no thought without reality. If the world is created by the spirit, here we have the true form of that creation. It is the nature of thought to point its own other. That makes thought concrete. Nothing is unreal or illusory. Everything is an expression of the spirit.

This may be called a form of *objective idealism.* It explains all things, but does not explain them away. All things are real as made by divine reason; and they are not alien to us, because we too embody that reason. There is no spiri-

tual principle higher than this. All things have their place and meaning in the ultimate scheme of reason. Nothing is to be rejected, except in-so-far as it is partial, self-contradictory and opposed to reason. Reconstituted into the whole, everything is real, significant and beautiful. As a theory of knowledge, it is objective idealism; because the world is real, and it is actually presented to the individual. As a theory of reality, it is metaphysical idealism; because there is no reality outside the reality of the spirit. Everything that is made is made by the spirit and is real in the spirit.

This form of Idealism is however open to several objections. (a) Do we know objective truth after all? May be, what we know is objective to us in the ordinary sense. But if it is *posited* by thought or made by thought, it is not reality. We have sought to assimilate reality to thought at the expense of its independence. The real is that which is not necessarily or essentially related to the knowledge of it or to thought in general. It may be known or it may not be known,—that should make no difference to it. If it does, it has no being apart from knowledge. How can such knowledge, which brings its object into being, fulfil the ideal of truth? *Necessary relatedness to thought, even the thought of a universal consciousness, makes for illusory being.*

We must avoid two extremes in any valid conception of reality. (1) One extreme is that reality is neither intelligence nor related to intelligence. This will render it vacuous and meaningless. It will be as good as nothing. (2) The other extreme is that reality is *necessarily related* to thought at whatever level. If the first is the realistic extreme, the second is the idealistic extreme. We escape the first, only to fall to the second. We forget that this idealistic position too does little justice to the facts of our experience and must be transcended. It is transcended when we recognise reality to be not necessarily related to intelligence, but to be itself this intelligence.

(b) The idealism based upon thought cannot be sustained by any analysis of thought. To say that the object

is what is posited or made or created by thought is wholly unrealistic. Thought, unaided, cannot create the appearance of objective reality. It can create this appearance, only when it functions on the basis of sensible intuition, as Kant showed. It is an over-simplification to suppose that thought can posit its own other, and the other will appear as given. Even in the case of illusory creation (e.g. rope-snake), thought functions within a sensible intuition, which alone can account for the appearance of otherness. It is only in dreams that thought appears to be all-in-all as a principle of creation. But even there, it does not appear to be functioning all by itself, but only within the frame-work of sensible intuitions provided by dreaming activity. It is a question whether we can dream a world without the conjoint contribution of sense and thought in the dream itself. This is because thought by itself is not intuitive, and cannot therefore create the impression of objective reality. To ignore sensible intuition and set up thought as the *sole* principle of creativity is to fly in the face of known facts. Thought, without some kind of intuition, is powerless to create a world.

(c) Thought is not a principle of truth. It is a principle of falsity. The limitations of thought in the knowledge of reality have been pointed out by several eminent western thinkers, such as Kant, Bradley Bergson, etc. The idea is common to many philosophers, both in the East and in the West, that thought distorts reality. This is especially the case with Advaita Vedanta. According to it, thought formalises or conceptualises what is beyond the concept. Reality is pure self-effulgent intelligence. We know it, with the aid of thought, as a dead world of things. It is a view diametrically opposed to that of Plato. The idea for Plato was the only ultimate reality. The idea for Vedanta is a subjective function only. To perceive reality under an idea is not to perceive it as it is in itself,—it is to *make* it in the image of thought. To idealise reality is to confuse an idea with the thing-in-itself. It is a species of erroneous knowledge.

It appears to us that Western Idealism based on thought has only *limited truth*. It has truth in-so-far as it shows the

error of naive realism or the view that *things as known to us exist in themselves.* It points to the immense contribution of the mind in the knowledge of reality. Mind gives the law to nature. But the element of truth which the theory possesses is also at the same time its chief condemnation. Reality cannot be subjectively determined. Subjective determination makes for error. Truth is only known when the roles of reality and the subject are reversed, and it is the reality that determines the subject. Idealism must be a stepping-stone to the knowledge of the Absolute Spirit.

(d) Western Idealism regards thought as the ultimate principle of spirituality. This is once again an error. Thought is only a function of the intelligent person, as feeling and will are. Our intelligence goes beyond all its functions. When it does not function, it does not cease to be itself. As a matter of fact, its function as pure intelligence is its only real function,—and this is never terminated. It is through this function that it reveals the birth as well as the disappearance, the coming as well as the going, of all mental happenings and functions. This is the only true and ultimate principle of spirituality.

It is true that we often use the expression "my intelligence". But my intelligence and my Self are one and the same thing. My Self is nothing but an ocean of pure intelligence. What I call *my intelligence* in ordinary parlance is only the mental function of thinking. But thinking is not my *self*. Thinking is variable. It comes and goes. It has moods and modes. We can think rightly or wrongly, correctly or incorrectly, etc. But the self is not variable. It is by its very nature invariable and incorruptible. It is the steady light of pure intelligence. It is unaffected by thought or by what it reveals. Even when all thought stops in deep sleep, this intelligence reveals the absence of thought. It never goes to sleep. It is always awake, always luminous. It is the only true principle of spirituality, not thought. Thought has only a borrowed spirituality. Some Western Idealists set up thought as a kind of super-indi-

vidual reality or as universal spirit. There is no such thing as thought in general or in the abstract. It is always individual thinking. The individual is greater than his thinking. He is a true spirit, while thought is only a subsidiary function of this spirit. Universal Spirit conceived in terms of thought is only a myth. Even God cannot be pure thought, but the thinker of His thoughts. We can transcend thought, we cannot transcend pure intelligence, which is the basis of all so-called spiritual activities.

We conclude that Idealism must lead beyond itself. It brings out the relativity of all things to intelligence, but it cannot find the Truth within its four walls. The world may be idea,—but Truth is not idea. It is the Absolute Spirit which repels every idea.

CHAPTER XXXVII

INTUITION—SENSIBLE AND INTELLECTUAL

We have said that the intellect can only function in knowledge on the basis of a sensible intuition. This gives rise to certain problems. Sensation is an intuitive mode of apprehension. We are supposed to be receptive in it. But what we thus receive does not as yet amount to knowledge. It becomes knowledge only when thought intervenes to determine the impressions received. But then how does thought do it? If what is received is in itself quite indeterminate, any determination by thought is bound to be arbitrary. There is nothing in the given to justify one determination rather than another. Knowledge in the circumstances becomes wholly man-made, and the value of the original intuition becomes nil. To the very legitimate question, *what* is given?, no answer is possible. To answer it, we must resort to certain determinations of thought arbitrarily superimposed upon the given.

A way out of this difficulty can be found if we accept a certain theory of perception advocated by certain writers on Vedanta who subscribe to *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda.* According to them, reality is something out there. If we are to know it as it is in itself, something in us must go out to contact this reality. It is the mind. The mind goes out to the object and envelopes it. Even so, knowledge cannot arise. There is no real contact or real relation between the object and the mind. As a matter of fact, what is *wholly unknown* to begin with cannot be known. Also, what is *wholly external* to intelligence cannot be known. What is already internally present to pure intelligence can be reflected in the mind through the above procedure; and when it is so reflected, it is said to be actually known. What happens at the

moment of knowledge is that through the outgoing mental activity the veil of ignorance enveloping the object is withdrawn, and a unity (which is already present but not recognised) is established between the pure intelligence underlying the object and the pure intelligence underlying the subjective or mental activity, so that what is already revealed to the former becomes revealed to the latter. This revelation to "intelligence as determined by the mind (*antahkaraṇa*)" is what we call knowledge.

Whatever the ultimate merit of this descriptive analysis of perceptual knowledge, it has undoubtedly certain advantages over the commonly accepted variety: (a) Reality must be known as it is in itself and in the place where it exists. It is the subject that must go out to contact such reality. If reality approaches the subject through media that intervene and distort it, and that are in any case corruptible in nature, our knowledge cannot be true to reality. The commonly accepted method of knowledge through a physiological excitation may give us knowledge of a certain state of the brain,—it cannot give us knowledge of an external and independent reality.

(b) The common-sense view is that the wholly unknown becomes known. According to the present view, what is wholly unknown and so unrelated to intelligence at any level whatsoever is nothing at all. How can it come to be related to intelligence? Only that which is already related can be re-related, what is already known can be re-known. The only difference between the unknown and the known is that the former is related to pure intelligence and therefore it is known as unknown, while the latter is related to "pure intelligence qualified by the mind" and therefore known as known. If anything drops out of *all* relation to intelligence, it is dead for ever. It is not a fit object of knowledge. It is nothing at all.

(c) According to commonsense, knowledge-relation is like other relations in which two different things are brought together. According to the Vedantic view here enunciated,

knowledge cannot arise through any external relation. In an external relation, each term remains in its place and neither term can go out of itself to influence the other. We can indeed bring them together, but we cannot make one of the terms enter into the other. Knowledge-relation is therefore an essentially internal relation. This means that the object is internal to intelligence, i.e., it is related to intelligence through the relation of false identity. The object is what it is only as it is so related or it is nothing at all.

For all these reasons, the Vedantic account of preceptual knowledge is definitely superior to the common-sense view. No doubt it looks queer by modern scientific standards and beliefs,—but it does better justice to the *concept of knowledge* and to the nature of the relation between intelligence and object. If we want to know external reality, we must somehow reach it ourselves, and not allow it to travel to us via the brain. Some European philosophers openly claim that what we know is determined by the state of the brain—external reality is only a big question-mark. All that we can know about it is some similarity or parallelism, so far as the pattern is concerned, between the knocks given at the door of the senses and the knocks noted inside by the mind.

Let us however pursue the analysis of knowledge based upon the commonly accepted view of perceptual knowledge. We want to determine the actual contribution of sensible intuition. This we said is something indeterminate. The indeterminate is made determinate by thought. We have now two alternatives open to us: (a) We can argue that the intuited content is the reality. This reality is indeterminate. All determinations are subjective. They therefore distort reality,—they do not reveal it. We know reality at the intuitive level, not at the advanced level of thought which misrepresents that reality. Perhaps pure sensible intuition is not available. Thought is present at the lowest level of intuitive awareness. In that case, all our knowledge is a mixture of truth and error. Perhaps pure sensible intuition can be

cultivated. But without the intellect, it would not amount to knowledge, which we can reflectively recognise as such. What is certain is that we cannot claim to know *the truth* at the level of perceptual knowledge. Indeed there *is* an element of truth. But we cannot dissociate it easily from error. When all the determinations of thought are eliminated, reality itself is eliminated and nothing is left for knowledge.

(b) We can also argue that the purely intuited content, being indeterminate, is nothing at all. All knowledge is determinate knowledge. But the determinations must determine something or refer to something. This something is the ultimate, and therefore the true, subject in all judgments. 'This is a table', 'the table is round', etc. Here 'table' and 'round' are both adjectives. Even the term 'this' can be analysed into some spatio-temporal relations. What cannot be analysed away or treated as an adjective is the ultimate subject or the absolute reality. This again may be treated as the system of all the adjectives, or as something beyond all determinations and in that sense indeterminate-in-itself. In the former case, truth will be the whole, arrived at through the totality of all the partial views supplementing each other. This is what we generally understand by Western Absolute Idealism. In the latter case, we must evolve a method of knowledge which can dispense with all the determinations, and yet grasp directly and intellectually the Indeterminate-in-itself.

These are developments of our analysis of perceptual knowledge, which have their own difficulties and may not be accepted. To avoid all these difficulties and to justify common-sense, it is argued that the analysis of knowledge into a sensible intuition on the one hand and thought on the other is wholly arbitrary and artificial. The most primitive knowledge we ever have is more or less determinate. Thought is present in all our sensible intuitions. We *begin* with knowledge, we do not arrive at it through a non-cognitive process. As a matter of fact, we cannot go behind knowledge and construct it out of something that is not knowledge. We begin with knowledge that is vaguely determi-

nate. It becomes more and more determinate as we consciously use our intellect. The whole process of knowledge is from the less explicit to the more explicit. There is no hiatus between intuition and thought, and no incompatibility between them. It is one continuous process from beginning to end, in which thought and intuition are necessarily united.

This is however not to solve a problem, but to slur over it. Intuition and thought are not the same thing. They are two different things involved in all knowledge of reality. We cannot say that the object of knowledge is given ready-made by reality itself and is simply impressed upon a vacant mind. If that were possible, intuition would amount to complete knowledge, and no thinking of the mind would be necessary in order to know. The mind would be purely passive in knowledge,—a view which was completely refuted by Kant. Knowledge arises only as the mind becomes active and judges what it receives. But then we need to distinguish the contribution of intuition from the contribution of thought, or the contribution of reality from the contribution of the mind. Can we really succeed here, or is the whole problem fictitious?

It has become fashionable these days to revert to a position akin to that of Locke, to reject the theory of judgment in knowledge, and to substitute for it the theory of sense-data. We are supposed to know something directly, and this something is called a sense-datum. It is knowledge by acquaintance as distinguished from knowledge by description. A sense-datum is known by acquaintance, and a physical object is known by description.

A question naturally arises here. Sense-data are obviously different from physical objects. We may be said to know the status of physical objects. They are independent of every mind. But what is the status of sense-data? Is a sense-datum a part of the surface of a physical object, for instance? If it were, there would be only one thing, namely the physical object, and we could be said to know the physi-

cal object by direct acquaintance. It is a view similar to that of naive realism, which is a very crude theory of knowledge. It makes no provision for the possibility of error and subjectivity in knowledge. Taken to its logical conclusion, we shall have to say that a thing is both round and elliptical, small and big, if it is viewed from different positions.

Let us now suppose that the sense-datum is indeed independent of the mind and located in physical space, but it is intermediate between the physical object and the percipient. But then are there two real entities outside of us,—the physical object *and* the sense-datum? It cannot be said that we are aware of two different kinds of entities in a certain relation. May be, we are aware of sense-data only, in which case the hypothesis of physical objects is unjustified and unnecessary. We may want to get at the physical object of common-sense, but we succeed only in getting at certain sense-data. The common speech about physical objects becomes only a common error.

It may be that sense-data are mental images (just like ideas) super-imposed upon some kind of physical or objective reality; or alternatively, they are themselves certain objective entities existing in their own right. In the former case, they would not be fit objects of knowledge, being purely subjective in character. In the latter case, we could be said to *know* them. But then there would be no room for erroneous knowledge, and we could not make any distinction between a subjective appearance to us and reality. Everything would *be* as it is sensibly apprehended. This would reduce all knowledge to a shadow dream-world in which mere appearance is the reality. The theory of sense-data solves no problem. Considered from any point of view, it is found to be quite untenable. We must return to a theory of judgment, according to which sensible intuition is the basis of knowledge, but does not itself amount to knowledge.

It may now be argued that although the exact nature of the relationship of intuition and thought is a problem for us

humans and may even be insoluble, it need not be so for a superior being. Such a being need not sensibly intuit in order to know. He will not have a body, and his contacts with reality will not be physical. Thought will be the only instrument of knowledge for him. This thought will naturally fill the place of intuition. It will be intuitive by its very nature. What the divine being thinks will appear as reality or become reality. According to the theistic tradition, God said, "Let there be....",—and the thing *was*. God does not think vain or useless thoughts. His thinking is creative of its objects. There is nothing outside of God which God may be required to know sensibly. If there were anything of the sort, and if His method of knowledge were similar to ours, His omniscience would be at stake. He thinks a world,—and there is the world! No problem arises here of reconciling sense and thought. We have a species of thought which is itself intuitive. We may call it an intellectual intuition.

We cannot find any truth in this view. The intellectual intuition mentioned above will not be a species of knowledge. It will be a species of delusion. An intuition, which has a cognitive character, must refer to a thing which exists prior to it and independently of it. Such reality alone can be said to be known or directly intuited. If some-one thinks and the thing comes up,—what is the status of the thing? What is certain is that it cannot be reality, and cannot therefore be a fit object of knowledge. It is also to be noted in this connection that thought can only think ideas, never reality. Is there no distinction between ideas and reality? It is only in Plato's philosophy that a non-distinction of the two obtains. It is not so for us. The idea is subjective and ours. Reality, on the other hand, has nothing to do with our subjective thinking. The only way the two can be brought together in a sort of indistinguishable unity is through the relation of false identity. This happens in the perception of the illusory. There is no case of true knowledge, recognised by all philosophers, where *our idea* and *reality* coalesce, so that what we think is just indistinguishable from reality as it

is *in itself*. The intuitiveness of the intellect is not proved even in the case of God.

There are philosophers who think that we can go from idea to reality. If, for instance, we have the idea of God, there ought to be a reality corresponding to the idea that alone could have implanted the idea in our minds. How otherwise can we account for the fact of the idea? But the transition from idea to reality is unwarranted. An uninstructed mind does not have the idea of God or of the most perfect being. It is an idea which we acquire from the scripture. The scripture may be the word of God. But then it can prove the reality of God only to those who accept it as authoritative or as *pramāṇa*. We can in this sense go from the scripture to God, but we cannot go from the mere idea to God. Western rationalists accept the latter alternative, while Indian philosophers the former.

Hegel gave a twist to the ontological argument. He did not infer reality from idea. He just identified the two. There was no reality apart from the idea; and the only question was, what idea constituted the Idea of Reason par excellence, and therefore Absolute Reality. This was the Absolute Idea, which alone was both inclusive and self-consistent to the highest degree. A similar mistake was made by Spinoza. He started with a definition of Substance, as though that proved the reality of Substance. An idea is after all a subjective entity. It has got to be distinguished from reality which is in-itself.

Spinoza speaks of the intellectual love of God. This might appear to be a species of higher knowledge given to the intellect. According to him, we must perceive all things under the form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*). All things are *in* God and *are* God. But what is God? Is it anything more than the abstraction of a unity underlying all things? It is comparable to Hegel's category of *being*, or the *sat*-attribute of Vedanta. This cannot amount to knowledge of ultimate reality, unless we stretch our imagination and invest the underlying unity with whatever excellences

God is credited with by the scripture and popular belief. It is only when we combine together an abstraction of thought with certain religious feelings that we are able to give any meaning to Spinoza's intellectual love of God.

A genuine intellectual intuition must combine the following elements: (a) Reality cannot be known through any idea. *It cannot therefore be known descriptively;* for all description is in terms of ideas. If reality is to be described at all to facilitate knowledge, it can only be symbolically described. A symbolic description merely points to a thing which is beyond all description.

(b) A thing that is sensed can only be known through description, if at all. *What cannot be described must therefore be essentially super-sensible.* It may in some sense be like Kant's thing-in-itself, but not unknowable like the latter. There must be some way of knowing the super-sensible and the metaphysical.

(c) The method of knowledge must conform to the nature of reality. If reality is physical or sensible, the common method of perceptual judgment will do. If reality is metaphysical in the Kantian sense, only an intellectual assertion of it is possible. Its fuller and more complete nature will be beyond the scope of the intellect or any other known method of knowledge. But if reality is metaphysical and at the same time *intelligent and self-revealing to thought,* its fuller knowledge by the latter is possible.

(d) Thought ordinarily knows by judgment. This is ruled out here. The only other possibility is *knowledge by identity.* Here thought starts with a judgment. But what the judgment signifies is not mere difference, or unity in difference or differentiated unity. What it signifies is real identity of substance. The difference of the terms in the judgment is taken for granted on the basis of popular understanding and belief. The judgment annuls the belief and asserts the identity. This is a new species of knowledge altogether.

We now contend that the only metaphysical reality which is at the same time intelligent by its very nature is our own true Self. We know this Self under the form of 'I'. But this knowledge is mixed with error. We confuse the real Self with the not-Self. A process of discrimination is thus called for to resolve the confusion. When this discrimination has done its job, some ignorance is still left; for we fail to recognise that the Self is no other than Brahman, the infinitely great. It is only when this ignorance is removed through proper study (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*), that we can be said to know the ultimate spiritual reality for what it really is.

It is common ground between all philosophers that genuine knowledge must be knowledge on the part of the intellect. It is only when the intellect is enlightened that we can be said truly to know. The intellect however cannot of itself jump to the truth. It must have a source of information. If this source is not sensible intuition, then it must be the revealed word. The revealed word is bound to give rise to many doubts. These doubts can only be removed through an analysis of one's experience. When all the doubts are removed, the old and erroneous habits of thought may still persist. These can only be eliminated and truth assimilated completely through an effort of the will or what may be called a meditative process. A non-intellectual intuition or feeling has no cognitive value. It cannot take the place of intellectual conviction and discernment.

The intellect knows at different levels. Knowledge of the external world through sense-perception is one level. Knowledge of the Absolute Spirit is a different level. Here the judgment-form leads to the knowledge of identity. The Absolute Spirit thus known is an object of a sort. It is not object in the Kantian sense, according to which the intellect informs the object known. It is object only in the sense that the intellect takes on the form of reality and is modelled on it. It is called *vṛtti-vyāpti* as against *phala-vyāpti*. There is a coalescence of the intellect with reality. This new

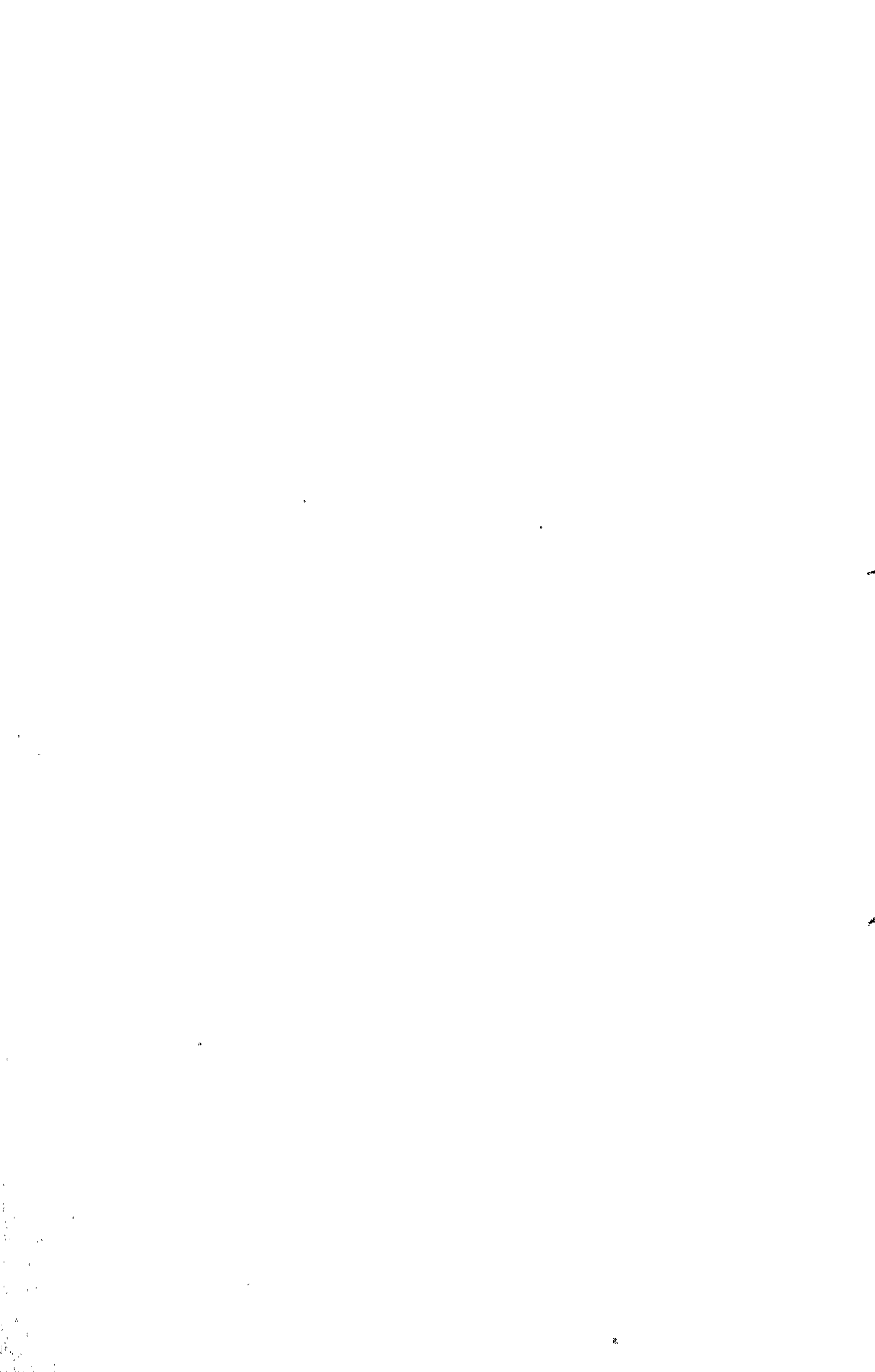
variety of knowledge has a peculiarity of its own. Since the intellect does not judge reality, the distinction of the subject and the predicate as well as the distinction of the subject and the object are both absent. It is the knowledge of unity. It lacks the tripartite distinction of the knower, the known and knowledge. It is an indivisible form of knowledge without distinctions.

We said that all knowledge starts with a judgment-form, but it need not be a judgment in substance. In the case of the knowledge of the Spirit, the judgment-form is "Thou art that (*tattvamasi*)." *Thou* stands for the individual person (*jīva*), and *that* stands for the Absolute Reality (Brahman). The statement does not mean that the individual is a qualifying adjunct of the Absolute, or the individual is a part of the Absolute, or the individual stands in some other subordinate relation to the Absolute. The statement means that there is a literal identity between the two. Evidently, literal or real identity cannot be a relation. This identity is achieved not through the literal meaning of the terms, which clearly are not synonymous, but through their symbolic meaning. What is intended to be conveyed by the statement is nothing short of absolute identity; and in order to grasp this identity, each term has some contribution to make.

The individual is defined as the "intelligent" person 'I', who is immediate (*pratyak*), who is self-identical in all his varying states, who is embodied, finite and limited, etc. Brahman, the Absolute, is defined as the ultimate cause of the birth, etc. of the world; as pure being, pure intelligence, and pure bliss; as the Great, the unrelated, the infinite, etc. The identity of these two different entities is not literally possible. It is possible only through a certain interpretation, in which the terms are used as symbols of one and the same transcendent reality. Each of the terms must therefore lose part of its meaning, and retain the other part which can unite in order to give rise to an indivisible knowledge. This is called *jahat-ajahat-lakṣaṇā*, i.e. part retention and part rejection of the accepted meaning of the two terms. The immediacy, the

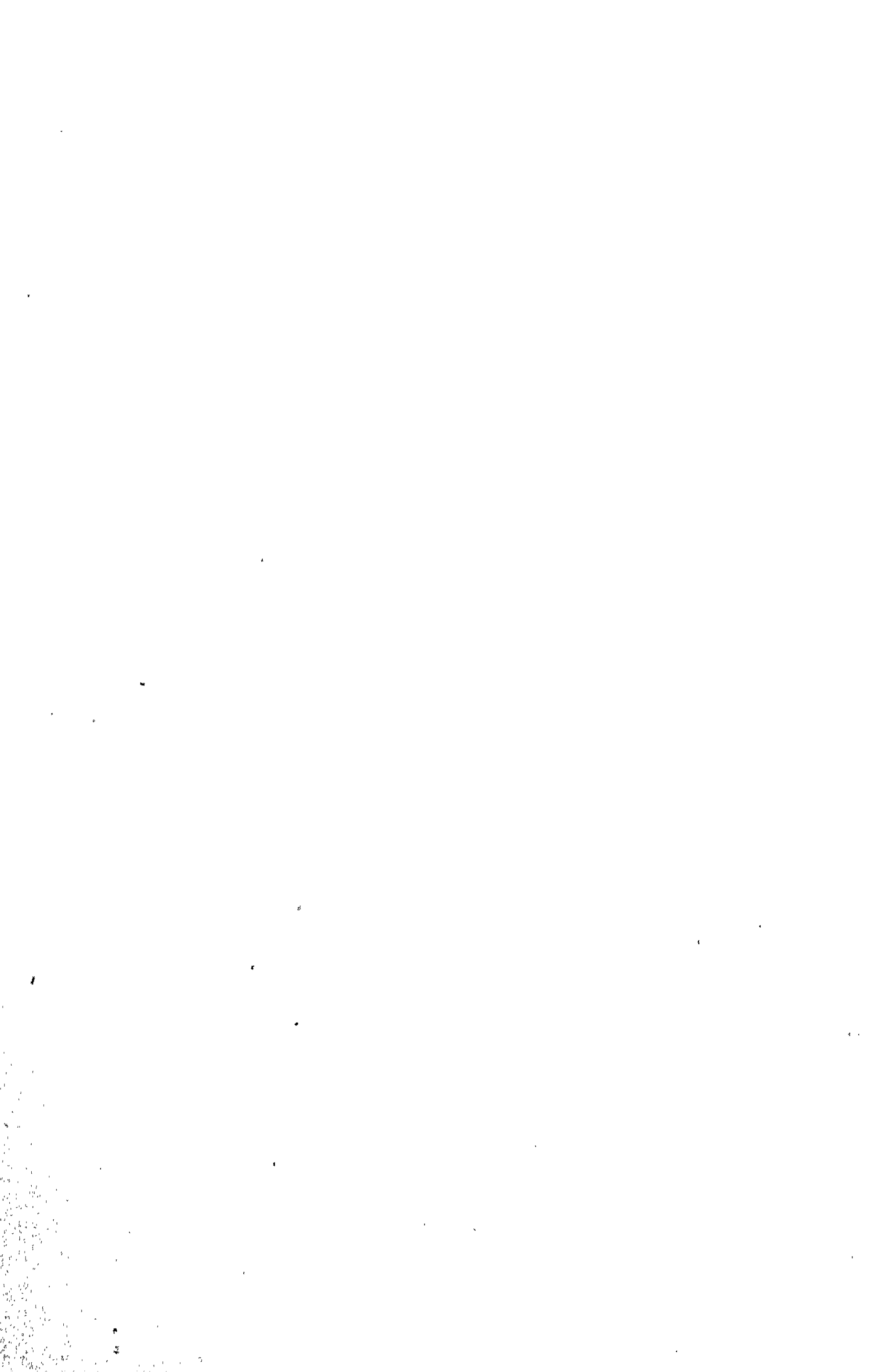
immutability and the non-objectivity of the Self thus coalesces with the Grêatness, the Infinitude, etc. of Brahman. What we get to know as the result of this process is a unity without terms and without relations. It is the knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

Our gain can now be noted. *By identifying Brahman with the Self,* we have achieved the necessary intuitive contact with the former; for the Self alone is immediately known. Again, *by identifying the Self with Brahman,* we have achieved the full splendour, greatness and maximum value, which we associate with ultimate metaphysical reality, for our Self. *Our knowledge is fully intellectual throughout.* For the intellect is never suppressed. It is meaningfully used to help us on to the truth. It removes all doubts and obstacles, and is present in the final apprehension. *Our knowledge of the identity is also fully intuitive,* for reality is self-giving and self-revealing to the purified and awakened intellect *and leaves no room for mediation.* This is the only legitimate meaning of what may be called an intellectual intuition. It is the saving knowledge which philosophy seeks.



PART V

RELIGION, ETHICS AND MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS



CHAPTER XXXVIII

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ABSOLUTE

It is a common practice to describe Advaita Vedanta as a philosophy of Illusionism. This, we have said, is not strictly true. It is not the purpose of Advaita Vedanta to establish illusoriness or *māyā* as a final truth. The main purpose is to lead the mind to the knowledge of non-dualistic reality or Brahman. A person who knows Brahman has already negated everything that is other to Brahman and therefore all duality. For him there is no world and no *māyā.* But those who do not know Brahman are still in the realm of ignorance and error. For them, duality is a fact. Unless it is rationally liquidated, there can be no advance towards non-dualism. Such persons, therefore, must be made to realize the utter insignificance and illusoriness of the world of duality. The illusoriness of the world is thus conditional. To the man of enlightenment, nothing is illusory; for he sees the truth, and the truth alone *is.* To the man of ignorance, nothing is illusory either; for he sees the world, and the world alone *is.* But a person who does not know the truth and who is therefore keen to know it can only be led to the truth through the door of illusoriness. He must first realize that what he sees is not the truth.

We thus find that the world is not illusory to the worldly, nor is it illusory to the emancipated; it is illusory only to the seeker. All questions are questions to the seeker. Those who do not seek have no question at all. The question, is the world real ?, implies at least the possibility of its illusoriness. It arises not because of any aesthetic need to play with words or to indulge in vain speculation, but because the situation demands it, and because our experience requires to be made self-consistent. It is a

serious question and demands a serious answer. Advaitism is not interested in building up a theory about any hypothetical reality. It is interested in the more practical task of leading a person from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge. It is to such a person that the illusoriness of the world can be significant. He will find that no other answer meets his case. It is the answer implicit in the question.

There are other traditions which do not accept the purely cognitive method of approach to Ultimate Reality. They have a composite method, in which cognition is subordinated to feeling or will. They have no need for the *theoretical purity* of their procedure, and practically no question about the illusoriness of the world or of anything socially accepted. Everything is real for them,—nature, human life, human society, etc. There can be no such thing as a trancendental illusion for them to be corrected only by a knowledge of transcendent reality. Errors are possible in the empirical sphere, and they can also be corrected there. But the world as a whole cannot be illusory. If we want to think metaphysically, we must seek to explain the world and not seek to annul it. We must go to the beginning of things and deduce the world from a higher reality. It is possible that the higher can give birth to the lower,—but what it cannot do is to produce a complete untruth which challenges its own bonafides. In other words, things as we find them are true in the main, and they may be taken to have a place in Ultimate Reality.

We shall now proceed to examine some of these views which are directly opposed to Advaita Vedanta: (a) A view is sometimes put forth that *the māyik* should not be interpreted to mean what is literally illusory or non-existent. *The māyik* is only the product of a distorted view of reality due to the finite mind, which views things in isolation. But there can be such a thing as a higher mind. What the higher mind knows is an integrated whole. It can know all things in Brahman, and Brahman in all things. But Brahman is

not pure static being, incapable of action. That is only one poise of Ultimate Reality, where it withdraws all creation within itself and all differences are abolished. Those who concentrate on this aspect of Brahman naturally find nothing real in the world. They find Brahman as the very negation of the world and as pure static being. But this is only a one-sided view. It gives rise to a new dualism,—Brahman on one side and the illusory world of *māyā* on the other. Advaita Vedanta is supposed to commit this mistake.

True monism must so conceive Brahman as to include, and even to account for, the world. This brings us to the second poise of Brahman, the dynamic poise, by which He puts forth a world. This dynamism of Brahman is not any sign of deficiency. For Brahman is eternally self-fulfilled. It is a sign of the overflow of infinite joy. "Out of bliss are all things created, in bliss they stay, and to bliss they return". This creation out of bliss has no purpose behind it. It may rightly therefore be called the sportive creation of God or God's *Līlā*.

It may further be noted that the world is not alien to Brahman. It is throughout pervaded by Brahman. As a matter of fact, Brahman Himself has descended from His pure Godhead, through different levels of being, right up to matter. This descent of the Spirit may be called evolution. In matter, the last evolute, the Spirit forgets itself. But through an inherent impulse of self-realization in matter itself, the reverse process is bound to start. The Spirit seeks to find itself and return to its our pure Godhead. This return journey of the Spirit may be called involution. Such is the rhythm of reality in its dynamic aspect. If we recognise it and avail ourselves of the inherent tendency of all life towards Godhead, our life too can progressively partake of the Divine Life. That is the true purpose of creation.

We cannot agree with this view. The Absolute is here conceived on the model of the finite individual. The finite individual is subject to changing states, over which he has no control. He sleeps and he wakes up. These states just

supervene upon him, because of the bondage of the body. Brahman can have no such bondage. What then explains His two poses, the static and the dynamic? Again, the thing itself must be different from the poses and self-identical through them. If that is so, the poses can only be *accidents* of reality, and not part of its own nature. Will that nature have any poses? Only a complex entity like the individual, open to pressures of various kinds from within, can have poses; and even then, we distinguish the self-identical entity that he is from the poses which he adopts at various times. A perfect being, possessed of infinite joy, can have no changes of states and no poses. He will be the same eternally. The moment He changes, perfection has changed too, and it can only change to something less perfect.

The Upaniṣadic statement, "the world has come out of bliss, stays in bliss and goes back to bliss", has another and a more sensible interpretation. Worldly existence is the very opposite of bliss. It is pain-ridden. All evil belongs to our connection with the body and through the body to the world. But Brahman is not responsible for the existence of the world and all evil that there is in it. He has not created it. It is created by ignorance and error; and that is the ultimate source of all evil. Underlying this creation however is the Absolute Reality whose very nature is joy. We can therefore rightly claim that the world which is illusorily created by ignorance is born out of Brahman, stays in Brahman and goes back to Brahman. There is joy everywhere, for Brahman is everywhere. Only we have created for ourselves pain and sorrow through our own ignorance. We need only know the truth, and we shall be free. This is Advaitism. If, however, we interpret literally the statement about creation out of bliss, it becomes incomprehensible how a world that is full of pain should come out of its very opposite, namely bliss. How can bliss go out of itself to create *an other,* when it is the very image of self-fulfilment?

The process of evolution and involution appears to us to be a sort of make-believe. Why should Brahman descend

to the level of the mind, with its evil, narrowness of outlook and ignorance; then descend further to the level of brute-life, with all its pain and suffering; and finally to the level of unconscious matter? What is the gain? And then the return-journey! What does it achieve except the original position from which descent and degradation started? The upward journey achieves no more than the original self-awareness, after a very long and unnecessary travail dominated by ignorance and pain. The whole story of creation looks absurd, as every such story of creation on the part of Absolute Reality is bound to look. The sort of monism here propounded no doubt does away with the principle of *māyā,* but it only succeeds in transferring *māyā* into the *nature* of God Himself and thus infecting it with all the evil of ignorance and self-forgetfulness. Poetry can be no substitute for clear philosophical thinking.

(b) We now come to the theistic Absolute. There is a view which, taking into consideration all the evil that there is in nature and in human history, is prepared to accept some limitation upon God and regards God as after all a limited God. The limitation need not be conceived in terms of the personified principle of evil called Satan or in terms of the impersonal and non-spiritual principle of matter. It may be conceived as being in some sense internal to God or as a limitation of His power, so that He cannot abolish altogether all evil from the universe which He himself may be said to have created and made to work by some law. But this view of a limited God is clearly not the genuine theistic view. It is encumbered by empirical considerations which are not relevant to the non-empirical and transcendent reality of God. On empirical grounds, God need not be posited at all. A limited God would satisfy no-one,—neither the religious man nor the man of science. The genuine and orthodox theistic view is that God is the Great Person, with no limitation of any kind.

'Person' is the highest category of the spirit with which we are familiar. The person of God may be conceived on

the analogy of the human person, for that is the nearest approach to it. After all God created man in His own image. The human person is endowed with intelligence and will, love and goodness. The divine person must have all these qualities in immeasurable degree. The divine person is *transcendent*. We can therefore *feel* His presence, but never exactly *know* Him. He is so infinitely great in every respect that human conception cannot reach Him or visualise His greatness. He is always the Great and the Transcendent, beyond words and beyond conception. He embodies the highest value in knowledge, in power and in goodness. He is transcendent in His nature, but immanent in His being.

The evidence for God of this description is manifold. It is not strictly logical, but it is highly probable and convincing. (1) There is *religious experience* which has reference to a transcendent person. Indeed the sceptic can doubt it and refuse to admit it as evidence of objective reality. But it is at least an open question whether he is a normal human being or those others who have the experience. We may however admit that the experience in question is not decisive in the matter. There can be two opinions about its real import.

(2) There is the *cosmological argument*. Things that happen must have a cause. We know secondary causes only. They are not real causes. They necessarily lead on to a First Cause which is cause only and never an effect. This cause cannot be part of the world. It must be outside the world and transcendent to it. The first and free cause is what we call God.

(3) A third argument may be based upon moral values. There are those who recognise in the moral law an authority and an objectivity that go beyond the individual and society. The moral law for them is not a man-made law. It belongs to an order of reality which demands man's unconditional allegiance. The law therefore reinforces the belief in the moral governance of the universe and

the conservation of values in the ultimate nature of reality. This is once again God.

This view is naturally acceptable to a religious-minded person. But its validity is more practical than theoretical. On theoretical grounds it can be criticised. We may agree that the category of 'person' is the highest we know. But what is the analysis of 'person'? The persons we know are all embodied persons. These embodied persons perform certain functions. They have a sense of responsibility and of duty. They are possessed of intelligence and a will that is free. They are capable of giving love and receiving it. Animals and children not possessing these higher capacities are not exactly persons. A fully developed man in the above sense alone is a real person. We can of-course conceive persons at higher and higher levels. But then we shall be merely extending the concept of man to other beings,—perhaps a more luminous body, a higher intelligence, greater freedom, greater power, etc. The superman will excel in most of these qualities. May be, God is the name of the person who stands at the top of the ladder of all human excellences. We go from man to God. God is the Great Person who sums up in His being all those excellences which man faintly seeks to realize in his mundane existence.

It is quite evident from the above that the concept of 'person' is a complex one. It is possible that the body is a dispensable element of a person and that therefore there can be disembodied persons. It is possible also that the body can be of various grades of subtlety, and that it is only the physical body that is inessential to a person. There is however no doubt that a person is a *spiritual* entity with a *spiritual function.* We can conceive a spiritual entity only on the analogy of what we call our self; and this self is spoken as 'I'. If anybody is a person, he is an "I" exactly as I am. We have no two intuitions of 'I'. There can be no greater *I* or a smaller *I,* no superior *I* and an inferior *I.* Even the Highest Person must speak of Himself as *I* just as I do. *There is no difference in the spiritual basis of different persons,*

There is difference only in the function or in the capacity for certain intelligent or purposeful operations. But if that is so, we need to make a distinction between the spiritual entity as such and the various functions which are attributed to it. The latter can vary, the latter can remain in abeyance; the former must continue as self-identical through them and even in the absence of them. I may think, or I may not think, or I may think otherwise; I may do my duty, or I do just the opposite; but through all these variations, I remain the same self-identical spiritual entity. The term 'person' has for us certain over-tones of spiritual functions. When these are put in their proper place and distinguished from the inner being or the spiritual entity to which they are attributed, the *real person* stands out as something immutable and qualitatively different from the functions which are only accidentally and erroneously related to it. If God has these functions, and if I, the individual, have them, we are not different in our spiritual substance, but different only in our functions, which hang about us in our ignorance.

By our analysis, the real person stands for a self-identical entity that is different from the body and different from the mental functions at all levels. The moment we mix up the real person with the body, etc., we get a finite person. By this mixed standard, where the function is part and parcel of the person, there can be no such thing as the Absolute Person, or the Infinite Person, or the Perfect Person. Personality, taken in the whole and together with its accidents, implies limitation. The moment therefore we attribute to God intellect or will or feeling, which are activities of the mind and which are inalienable from finite human existence, we make God after the image of man. The real person (and in this respect God and man are alike) is the attributeless person, that sustains the limitations of personality, but itself has none of them. It will be more to our purpose if we conceive man as a person, and conceive person as part human (limited) and part divine (unlimited), and conceive God as person without the wrongly attributed

humanity. Man will thus become a pointer to God, a stepping-stone to the knowledge of true divinity. God is the only true Person in this sense. We are persons in a derivative sense, because we partake of the nature of God. We might even say that there is one true Person in all persons. But then God ceases to be a glorified man acting the human way. We have not degraded God to man, but raised man to Godhead.

(c) We now come to the Absolute as conceived by some Western Idealists. It is admitted by these philosophers that the concept of a personal God is inadequate. A person is necessarily finite, a centre of experience. The Absolute or the whole cannot be *a* centre of experience. It must be something impersonal. Absolute thought or Absolute Experience can be impersonal. It alone can transcend every limitation.

There are some who think that Reason is the ultimate truth of man and nature. It is the Universal Spirit. If anything exists, it must submit to the categories of Reason. Reason is greater than the finite person. There are others who think that all the categories of Reason are infected with contradiction, and that thought is by its very nature incapable of knowing the whole truth or the absolute truth. They therefore set up the ideal of a higher and integral experience above the level of discursive thought. This experience will avoid all the divisions and pitfalls of thought. It will be a sort of unitive experience, inclusive of the differences and all the material of our common experience. It will accept everything and transmute everything. It will do this through a method of progressive supplementation, inclusiveness and harmony. Nothing is wholly false or unreal. Everything is true, but only partially true. We have not therefore to break with our common experience of reality. We have merely to integrate it and improve it. The Whole alone is unconditionally true. The real distinction is not between absolutely true and absolutely false, but between partially true which we call appearance and absolutely true which is reality.

Both these forms of the Absolute have something in common, — there is an inclusive experience which is differentiated in itself. There can be no experience of a pure undifferentiated unity. Where they differ is with respect to the position and importance of thought. But evidently thought cannot be wholly absent from any experience of reality, even if its function is somewhat modified. Where all thought is absent, knowledge of reality is also absent, — as a matter of fact, theoretical consciousness itself is absent. We regard thought as the basis of the theoretical consciousness. All that might be required is that thought should contact reality without the mediating role of ideas and in a sort of direct intuitive apprehension.

Let it be admitted that the Absolute is some kind of *inclusive experience*. But any such experience, whether it is of the nature of thought or of the nature of feeling or of something else, can only be a function of the mind. The real Spirit is beyond the mind. We cannot accept the latter and reject the former. Thought or any form of mystic experience will after all be a mental affair. It will be by its very nature evanescent. It will be grounded in the Self. It cannot therefore take the place of the latter. The highest category of the Spirit, in our opinion, is the Self, not Thought or Feeling or Experience of any kind. There is no such thing as Thought-in-itself or Absolute Thought; but there is such a thing as Self-in-itself or Self the Absolute.

Secondly, in order to give meaning to "approximation to absolute truth" or to "higher and lower degrees of truth", there must be an absolute standard by which we can judge the degree of truth attained by us. This is possible where absolute truth can be recognised by its own evidence and is self-evidently true. It is not possible where the goal is infinite, and where the method of knowledge is not qualitatively different from all judgmental knowledge. If all our present knowledge is finite, how shall we reach the Infinite? Can we even be said to progress towards it? In comparison with infinity, all finite progress is reduced to nullity. How-

ever far we go, there is still infinite distance to traverse. The whole approach to Absolute Truth through supplementation of finite knowledge is wrong. It is quantitative, not qualitative.

The distinction between truth and falsehood is, literally speaking, absolute. But while there can be degrees of error, there can be no degrees of truth. Error can progressively correct itself and finally abolish itself. But truth is either whole and entire,—or it is no truth at all. Truth is one and indivisible. If knowledge conforms to reality and coalesces with it in direct intuitive contact, it is true; if it deviates even in the slightest degree, it is false. This safeguards the *objectivity of truth.* In the view under consideration, the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is wholly lost. The subject has to piece together different items of partial or erroneous knowledge as it comes by them through its own limited and imperfect methods of knowledge, and try to weave them together into a whole. The whole process is infected with subjectivity from beginning to end. If all that we ever know are appearances,—the result of a partial view,—how can we ever go from the partial to the whole and from appearance to reality? There is, on this view, nothing in reality itself that can control the subject and determine it to truth. There is also no need for any discipline to develop the right capacity in the subject for the higher knowledge and insight. Truth is not at the surface of things. It is not cheaply found. It does not communicate itself to persons who lack the capacity. Our objection then to the view under consideration is that the search for truth becomes endless, and subjectivity becomes inalienable from all knowledge.

Thirdly, the Absolute is taken in a more or less quantitative sense as *inclusive* of all appearances. Distinctions of any kind, whether in time or in space or in substance, are bound to perpetuate themselves even in the whole. Once they are incorporated in the Reality, they will always be there and determine its entire nature. We shall get a whole,

which will be finite. An infinite Whole which includes all differences is a misnomer. True, Absolute Reality must include everything, and leave nothing out. The known differences which constitute our world must be included too. But this 'inclusiveness' needs interpretation. If it means physical or literal incorporation, that is not possible. But if it means 'ontological containment', that is certainly possible. The ground of reality *contains*, in this latter sense, the illusory appearance superimposed upon it. Accordingly, to know the Absolute is to know all the appearances that are grounded in it or ontologically contained in it.

We have here examined roughly the Absolute of Sri Aurobindo, the Absolute of what may be called Christian theism, and the Absolute of certain Western Idealists. As against these, we have pointed to the Absolute of Advaita Vedanta. It is indeed not possible to get direct intuitive knowledge of Brahman through mere thinking and without any purifying spiritual discipline. But once we get this knowledge or some intimation of it, there is nothing more rational or more acceptable to the heart.

CHAPTER XXXIX

UNITIVE KNOWLEDGE

The central problem of all philosophy is supposed to be knowledge of unity. This unity is certainly not evident. Whether there is a unity behind the known differences is a question. If there is one, we are clearly ignorant of it. Nevertheless, the path of wisdom is supposed to lie not in knowing the many, which every-one does without any effort, but in knowing the *one in the many*. That is the goal of all religion and mysticism. We may have, philosophically speaking, nothing to do with these spheres of human activity, and may even be temperamentally opposed to all activities of an esoteric nature. But everyone does seek, as a matter of fact and quite unconsciously to himself, to go beyond the differences to a unity, which will explain them and illumine them. The Upaniṣads gave expression to this innate tendency of the human mind. They declared that their main object was to give knowledge of that knowing which all else is known (*yat-jñātvā-sarvam-idam-vijñātam-bhavatī*). According to this view, there is nothing more important or more valuable than knowledge of unity.

Science cannot achieve this goal, because of the imperfection and limitation of its method. Science starts with differences, and has to stay within them. All its problems relate to the *behaviour* of things. Science does not seek the ultimate *unity of being*. It seeks only *uniformity of behaviour*. The knowledge of behaviour is evidently an external knowledge of a thing. It does not tell us what a thing is in-itself or for itself. Indeed, there are philosophers who do not quite know what it is to be able to know the *being* of a thing as distinct from its *behaviour*. For them, the question 'what a thing *is*' can only mean 'how the thing *behaves*'.

We cannot agree with this view. We think that there is an important sense in which being is different from behaviour. Behaviour is something outward, something that can be observed. Being is inward, and cannot be observed. Being is the soul—behaviour belongs to the body. We must therefore penetrate the behaviour, penetrate the body, and get to that inward being which cannot be observed and which cannot be known by the methods of science. Is there any non-sensible intuition which will be helpful in this respect?

There are philosophers who disown the very possibility of any such intuition. They have however a limitless faith in the ability of thought to know all things that are fit objects of knowledge, whether sensible or super-sensible. If we want to know the ultimate unity of being, thought can provide certain analogies. There are aesthetic and organic wholes. But these clearly are not ontological unities. They are teleological unities only. The ontological unity known to us is the unity of substance behind the qualities. But this is just our problem. What is substance without qualities? Is it anything at all or a mere abstraction of thought? If it is an abstraction only, it is not a fit object of knowledge. But if it is more than an abstraction and a reality, what prevents us from knowing it for what it is and as distinct from the qualities? After all, the substance is supposed to lend its reality to the qualities, which are nothing without it, not vice-versa.

The truth is that as long as differences of qualities remain unreduced and stand out, they take the place of the unity, which becomes fictitious and verbal only. It is only when the differences are gradually reduced and dissolved into the unity, that the latter can stand out and become progressively more and more real, till it becomes the only thing real. Differences then become mere illusory appearances that never had any reality of their own. There is thus an alternation. Either the unity alone is real, and the differences are illusory; or the differences are real, and the

unity merely nominal and verbal. It is never the fact that both the differences and the unity are equally real and true.

There is the same problem about the unity of *being*. Being is common to all things that are said to have being. It is the unity underlying them. However and wherever things exist, they have being in the same sense. But we cannot isolate this being from the things, even as we cannot isolate wood from the toys made of wood and gold from the ornaments made of gold. There is however a difference. While we can still conceive gold as the substance out of which the different ornaments are made, and which is therefore more real than the different accidental forms and names which it assumes in different ornaments, it is very difficult to conceive that *being* is substantival while different things are merely different names and forms which this being has assumed. Gold has qualities of its own which it lends to the ornaments, being has no qualities and apparently no nature of its own which it can lend to all things.

Here we must remember that *being* is essentially a metaphysical entity, and not an empirical entity. It must have a *positive nature* and we must seek to know that nature. It is not an abstraction of thought, and it cannot be unknowable by its very nature. Even at this stage we know certain things, more or less negative in character, about it: (a) It is the pervasive reality, lying behind all things that we are said to know. (b) It is beyond all qualities and holds the qualities together in its own substance. (c) It is beyond all relations and supports the relations. (d) It is beyond all actions and functions, which are necessarily referred to it.

At present, we see the world, we do not see the unity hidden behind it. It is the privilege of the philosopher to seek to know this unity as clearly and directly, if not more so, as common people see the differences. To see the unity is like waking up from a nightmare to one's actual situation in life. There is a profound sense of disillusionment. However vivid the nightmare, its ontological value cannot com-

pare with the reality which the awakened soul has perforce to take note of. That person alone can be said to *know* the unity who has achieved this degree of disillusionment.

We make a beginning for the positive knowledge of unity with the intuition of the Self, which is the only spiritual reality which we directly know. It is however difficult to see that the Self is the reality behind the world; and it is still more difficult to see that all things are but forms or modes of the being of the Self. The physical world is par excellence the reality which excludes all that is intelligent. May be, the physical world embodies a spiritual reality which directs its processes from within. May be, there is a God outside the physical universe who is guiding and directing both nature and human history. We do not know any such spiritual entity; and even if there were one, there would still remain a radical difference of nature between the directing principle and that which it directed or between the indwelling spirit and matter. Nature certainly is not Spirit or a mode of Spirit. How can the two come together in a unity?

The difficulty here arises because we place matter and spirit side by side and then seek to know their inner unity or connection. The truth is that we can place one physical object by the side of another, but not so matter and spirit. Spirit is never related to matter in an external way. It is related to matter in one way only,—and that is through the knowledge-relation. This gives us the key to the unravelling of the unity behind nature. If we are consistent with this relation, we can reduce matter to the unity of the spirit.

The physical world is the sensible world. Take away sensible experience, and physicality has no meaning for us. Even when we do not actually sense a thing, we can only conceive its possible existence by relating it to an imagined sense-experience. In other words, sense-experience is fundamental to the nature of physicality. This gives us our first reduction of physicality in terms of the spirit. The physical world contains no more than what can be sensed

through our five sense-organs. It consists of the five specific kinds of objects sensibly known to us. We may call them sensible qualities or sensibilia. The whole physical world can thus be analysed without any residue into visual forms, auditory forms, tactual forms, etc. These forms have their reality not *in themselves,* but only in the appropriate sensation. We can say that all colours are united in visual experience which runs through them and gives meaning to them. Similarly, all sounds are united in audition, all smells in olfactory experience, etc. A measure of unity and a measure of spiritual inwardness is thus achieved for the apparently external and wholly physical world.

Sensations of different sense-organs are specific and diverse. They are unconnected. But the mind behind them is one and the same. It is the same mind that sees, hears, smells, etc. There are no compartments in the mind, and there is no incompatibility between the various sensations when they meet in the mind. What the eye cannot hear and the ear cannot see, the same mind can both see and hear through the respective sense-organs. We thus reach the second step in the unification of the diversity of the physical world. The mind is the unity.

The mind itself is diversified. It has various activities. Sometimes it senses one thing, sometimes another. Sometimes it thinks, sometimes imagines. Sometimes it feels, sometimes desires, etc. But all these activities have their unity in the ego or 'I'. The same 'I' hears, imagines, thinks, etc. *I* was yesterday busy, today *I* am free. It is one and the same person 'I' that does different things and experiences different objects at different times, and connects them into the unity of his own personal history. The diversified mind thus finds its unity in the personal self or the ego. The latter gives unity to all our experiences.

The ego itself is differentiated into the different moments of its history. It does not stand by itself. It is necessarily related to the different activities and experiences. The ego

itself can thus be broken up into a series of ego-es, each one different from its predecessor by its position in the series. I am the same, and yet different at every moment of my life. This difference is only reduced when we go beyond the ego to the self-identical and intelligent Self, that runs like a thread through our entire mental life and history. The ego is a limitation. It is a function of the mind. It is transcended. It is revealed in its successive forms. The Self is beyond those forms. It is immutable. It is the highest level of unity of all the known and the visible; and beyond it, it is not possible to go. Our search for the unity stops here.

The Upaniṣads give a very expressive analogy for this unity. As small rivulets meet in a big stream, and all streams meet in a big river, and all rivers meet in the great sea, so is it here. Diverse things meet in the senses. Senses meet in the mind. The diverse activities of the mind meet in the ego. The diversified ego finds its unity in the Self. We can also reverse this process and say, — the Self runs through all things and is their common substance. We call this Self by different names — cot and pot, matter and mind, etc. The man who sees truly sees the Self alone, and sees all things in the Self. The Self is the substantival ground, and the world is the world of name and form super-imposed upon the Self through sheer ignorance. The wise man sees all things *in* the Self and *as* the Self. This perception of unity alone has the highest truth and the highest value. Differences are not merely discarded as useless, they are used to lead on to the unity.

CHAPTER XL

FREEDOM FOR ONE AND FREEDOM FOR ALL

We have tried to show that Advaita Vedanta is based upon the possibility of complete and absolute freedom for an individual. Since this freedom is achieved through the knowledge of non-duality, it is inevitable that all duality must cease for the free person. For him, there can be no world and there can be no other individuals in bondage. This may mean that when one individual is freed, all are freed; or it may mean that when one individual is freed, he alone is freed, — all others must work out their own individual salvation.

Let us take the first alternative, namely that freedom for one entails freedom for all. But how is this possible? Freedom is not a gift which one individual can make to other individuals. If it could be a gift, all persons would naturally wait for a great spiritual genius to arise who could succeed in saving himself, and thereby save all the rest of mankind. No-one would put forth the right effort. Everyone would argue, "If we have all to sink or to swim together, let some-one more gifted than ourselves and one who can swim take us on".

We shall now suppose that freedom is not a gift. Everyone has to work for it himself; but he cannot fully and finally succeed until all are ready for it, so that they all attain freedom simultaneously. It is — "all or none". This too would create an impossible situation. Who would try for freedom, if the success of his best efforts is dependent upon the success of all other individuals in bondage? It is like investing each single individual with the power of the veto upon the efforts of the rest of mankind. The view is quite unacceptable.

The only common-sense alternative left is that each individual achieves his freedom for himself alone. Each becomes free through his own efforts; and when he becomes free, there is no duality for him. This however does not affect the status of other individuals. They continue to be in bondage and continue to strive. Thus freedom for some and bondage for others go on simultaneously.

This view clearly does not entail any very undesirable consequences. But it is not true in strict logic. It takes for granted the reality of many selfs and also the reality of their bondage. It is most consistent with the realism of the Saṅkhya system,—definitely not consistent with the Illusionism of Advaita Vedanta. According to the latter, there is no valid stand-point from which we can contemplate many individuals as real. It is merely the stand-point of the individual in bondage. He regards himself as 'I' and other individuals as 'you'. Since he can speak of himself as 'I' the speaker only in relation to 'you' the hearer, he cannot accept the reality of himself and reject the reality of others who stand in necessary relation to him. "If I, then you" appears a natural corollary. It can perhaps also be claimed that I have a direct intuition of 'you' as the person spoken to, even as I have a direct intuition of myself as the speaker or 'I'.

Advaita Vedanta differs from the Saṅkhya here. "I" may be related to "you". We may even have an intuition of "you" on the analogy of our intuition of "I". But we are forced to go beyond the "I". The "I" is only symbolic of a reality that is beyond the "I" and that cannot be literally spoken. It has no character through which it can be individuated. It cannot even be numerically distinct. We call it the Self or ātman. This Self is indicated by 'I' alone, never by 'you', unless 'you' is used with the same meaning as 'I'. "Thou art That" and "I am That" are both used with the same meaning, because 'thou' is understood as the equivalent of 'I'.

In order to rise to a knowledge of the true Self, we first negate all objectivity under the general name of 'you-ness

(*yuṣmat*)'. We then proceed to negate all subjectivity under the name of 'I-ness'. When this subjectivity is negated, nothing is left to be negated. With the negation of 'I', the whole related world of physical objects and other selfs is simultaneously negated.

Let us now take up the contention that each individual achieves his own freedom through his own efforts. These efforts can only have for their object knowledge of non-dualistic reality. If this knowledge is actually obtained, it is bound to dispel the illusion of one's own separate individuality as well as the illusion of the reality of other individuals. In other words, if one individual is freed, no real individuals are left in bondage. There is therefore a sense, metaphysically speaking, in which the freedom of one becomes in fact and in truth the freedom of all. Not that other individuals *become free*, but the problem of other individuals and of their freedom has ceased to be meaningful.

A further step here is naturally indicated. Once the emancipated soul realizes the illusory character of his own individuality, he cannot but regard his past bondage as well as his past efforts and achievements as equally illusory. It is not therefore a case of non-recognition of other individuals and recognition of his own individuality. It is non-recognition of all individuality wherever found. For him, there is no-one in bondage; no-one is a seeker; no-one is a *guru* and no-one disciple; and no-one becomes free. All appearances to the contrary are just illusory. There are thus only two stand-points on the subject,—the stand-point of common-sense and the stand-point of the emancipated soul. If the latter stand-point is the only right stand-point, the whole question of "freedom for one and freedom for all" is based upon wrong presuppositions and should not be asked. No answer will be a correct answer. There is neither the 'one' nor the 'all'. Since true knowledge cancels all duality, questions which arise from a knowledge of duality are bound to be illegitimate questions.

CHAPTER XLI

ADVAITA VEDANTA AND THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Religion is supposed to safeguard our highest spiritual values. If that is so, Advaita can claim to be the highest form of religion. But not unoften it is argued that Advaita Vedanta does not satisfy the needs of a truly religious consciousness, and is even incompatible with it. Its Absolute Reality called Brahman is impersonal and cold, and unresponsive to the needs of the human heart. The implication is that Advaita Vedanta is less than a religion. It is cold philosophy. The Absolute of philosophy may satisfy the intellect, but it fails to satisfy the heart. Since religion appeals to the heart and philosophy to the intellect, we cannot possibly combine the two into a single religion of Truth.

Let us now analyse some of the requirements of the religious consciousness: (a) The religious consciousness regards *person* as the highest category of reality. It is *spirit* par excellence. Man is a person. But he is a finite person. The highest person is God. Man is made in the image of God. We do not know God. It is therefore natural that we should seek to know God in the image of God. The self of man thus holds the key to Godhead. The affinity of this accepted Christian idea to Advaita Vedanta is clear.

(b) God is said to be the only uncreated being. Everything else is created by Him, and is therefore dependent for its being upon Him. He is the *alpha* and the *omega* of all things, the beginning and the end. This is very similar to the Advaitic view that Brahman is that Great Being, from which all things arise, in which they stay, and into which they go back.

(c) God is great in all conceivable ways. He is above time and space, and yet exists at all times and in all places.

He is great in all values,—His power is infinite, His intelligence is infinite (He knows everything), and His goodness is infinite. All these great qualities are summed up in the Advaitic characterisation of Brahman as *sat-cit-ānanda*.

(d) The *attributes* of God are not to be treated as distinct from the *being* of God. If they are so treated, they would be only externally related to God and not constitute His own nature or *svarūpa*. God may therefore be said to be the indivisible unity of all His attributes. What is distinct for our understanding is not distinct in the being of God. God is each one of His attributes in the fullest sense. This is once again the language of Advaita Vedanta.

(e) The most exalted person must have all the excellences of a person. We know what these excellences are, because man has them in a measure. But the excellences of man are very modest. They can always be improved upon (*sātīśaya*). The excellences of God, on the other hand, are the very last word of their kind,—they are *niratiśaya*. God's love is infinite love, His compassion is infinite compassion, etc. This is the positive side of the picture. On the negative side, God is free from all those limitations and deficiencies from which the person of man suffers, such as a body, ignorance, *rāg* and *dvesh* (attachment and its opposite hatred), etc.

To sum up, God is a person, who can be responsive to human love and human prayer, who is the Creator of the known and the visible, Director and Regulator (*niyantā*) of the entire world-process, moral Governor, and the Personification of all excellences in a superlative degree. Religion may be said to demand a God of this description.

The Upaniṣads too speak of the Great Being or Brahman in similar language. Apart from the other qualities enumerated above, He is said to be nearer to us than our own individual and separate selfs. He is the Self of our selfs (*Sarvabhuta-antarātmā*). He is the eternal witness. All things reside in Him, but He does not reside in them.

But is there such a God? If there is, religious experience will have a real object; and it can rightly be regarded as a genuine form of experience. But if there is no real God of this description, religious experience will have no more truth in it than all other fictions of the human imagination that satisfy merely the heart. There are many philosophers who so regard all religion. According to them, the chief ground for a belief in God is to be found in certain requirements of human feeling only. The so-called proofs of God are just a sort of make-believe. They really prove nothing.

It appears to us that the cosmological argument at least has some logical value. If we take the world for granted, we have to take God too for granted. He is the only principle of explanation for a changing series of events which we call a world. If something occurs, it must have a cause. The only genuine cause is a cause which is cause only and never an effect. The cause must therefore be immutable and eternal. It is truly the unmoved mover or the First Cause. We know a cause of this kind in our own free activity. Since the finite self cannot be said to have created the world, it must be a Self that is all-powerful and infinite. We call that Self God, and we endow Him with all those qualities which we seek to realise in ourselves and which we associate with the Perfect Person. God may thus be said to be a logical necessity for the changing world and an ideal necessity for the life of man.

Advaita Vedanta accepts the reality of God both on the grounds of reason and the authority of the scripture. But it refines the concept to make it more adequate philosophically. Nothing can be *really created.* The only thing, within our experience, that is ever created is the illusory. Even if God creates a world and this creation has any meaning for us, it must be an illusory creation. The power of illusion we call *māyā.* It is the power of ignorance and error. God creates the world with the power of *māyā.* This *māyā* cannot be part and parcel of the own nature of God. It is just an accident or an adjunct of God for creative purposes,

and is only related to Him through false identity. In other words, Brahman as related to the power of *māyā* cannot be the ultimate reality or the Absolute. He is only the *māyāvī*, the Lord of *māyā*.

Māyā cannot fall outside Brahman. If it does, Brahman will be limited by *māyā*, and there will be an ultimate dualism, which will be repugnant to monistic theism as well as to Advaita Vedanta. *Māyā* cannot fall within Brahman, for that will affect the nature of Brahman. It falls neither within nor without. It is only illusorily related to Brahman. But as so related, it cannot fail to affect the *status* of Brahman. This means that God the Creator or *Saguṇa Brahman* of man's conception is not the ultimate reality. The conception has a meaning and a use for man in bondage. To that extent, the God of religion has to be accepted and is quite real; but He is not ultimately real. The ultimately real is *nirguṇa* Brahman alone. When man realizes the unity and the identity of his own Self with It, God ceases to have any more reality for him

Is such a conclusion shocking to religious consciousness? Perhaps it is. Mere faith is extremely sensitive to criticism. But the true man of religion need not be despondent. The experience of the religious man is quite genuine as far as it goes. God is certainly more real than the world and more real than all finite creatures, including man. He is the Cause or the Ground. All things move and have their being in Him. This intellectual attitude is quite adequate for the life of feeling and will. But a religious man does not claim to *know* God, who is for him the Great and the Mysterious. He has therefore no right to claim finality or theoretical purity for his belief. He can only claim practical validity which is not questioned. A personal God is quite real for the religious consciousness. But this consciousness has many levels and many degrees of self-fulfilment. Advaita Vedanta merely points to the highest degree, where knowledge takes the place of belief and transforms the entire complexion of religious life.

The man of wisdom seeks knowledge, and he is therefore prepared to shed every bias and every prejudice, however dear to him. If he finds that the world is ultimately not real and illusory in character, its Creator becomes the Creator of illusions only. This single fact changes his whole perspective on God. All the relations in which the illusory enters cannot but be themselves illusory. If therefore the creatures are annulled, the Creator is annulled too. The genuine man of religion however has the consolation that all is not lost. Rather much is gained. The *Saguṇa Brahman,* through the process, has transformed Himself into *Nirguṇa Brahman,* the unconditional and the Absolute. For, *God the Person* is the same as *Brahman the Impersonal;* only He is no longer joined to the power of māyā and cannot therefore function within duality.

This view may not be acceptable to some students of Advaita Vedanta itself. They argue that *Saguṇa Brahman* or the God of religion is a necessary aspect of Ultimate Reality, and that *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* are two aspects of one and the same reality. It is a view similar to that of Sri Aurobindo, who spoke of a static pose and a dynamic pose of reality. Only Sri Aurobindo did not claim to represent Advaita Vedanta. He spoke for himself only. That cannot be asid of Shri S. N. L. Shrivastava who contributes an article on the subject in "Philosophy—East and West, Vol VII Nos. 3 and 4." He says there, "Reality, with its differentiation into God, world and individual souls, is a necessary self-expression or self-revelation of Brahman in names-and-forms—I am using the word 'necessary' advisedly. It is not often realized that manifestation as the name-and-form world, is, according to Śaṅkara, a necessity inherent in the very nature of *Brahman.*" p. 95. In another place, he says, "Again, *Brahman's* conditioned form is the result of its own self-conditioning by its own power of māyā." p. 98. Again, "The twofold nature of *Brahman,* unconditioned and conditioned, is a cardinal metaphysical tenet of Śaṅkara......Adhering to Śaṅkara's enunciation of the two-sided nature of *Brahman,* it would be more correct if we say that *Brahman* according

to him is *Nirguṇa-Saguṇa,* unconditioned-conditioned, impersonal-personal, transcendent-immanent, and so on, rather than saying that it is one to the exclusion of the other." p. 101.

This is a wholly misleading interpretation of Advaita Vedanta. If Brahman really has the power of *māyā,* and there is a necessity in the very nature of Brahman to express Itself in a world of names and forms, Brahman must be internally differentiated into *being* and the *power* of being. That will give rise to the problem of the relation between the two. Not only that. All the effects of *māyā* would be quite as real as Brahman Itself. Nothing should be illusory in character. This may be Shrivastava's own view, but it is not Advaita Vedanta. According to the latter, *māyā* has no place in ultimate reality. Its only relation to this reality is that of false identity. One real thing cannot be falsely identified with another real thing. Only something imaginary or purely conceptual can be so identified with a real thing. But then it has no other status than that of the illusory. If that is so, any relation of *māyā* to Brahman is bound to affect the latter and detract from its unrelated status. It would be wrong therefore to place *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* on the same level, or to conclude that ultimate reality or Brahman is *both* Nirguṇa and Saguṇa. It is a still greater distortion of the truth to claim that the differences of God, world and individual souls are a necessary self-expression of Brahman. Nothing can be more alien to Advaita Vedanta. Even Shrivastava has been forced to admit that God in Śaṅkara's philosophy has only a phenomenal or *vyāvahārika* reality. The *vyāvahārika* is not less illusory than all other illusory things, even if it passes for the real in the state of our bondage.

We have so far admitted Brahman with the *upādhi* (adjunct) of māyā or *Saguṇa* Brahman as quite a legitimate postulate for explaining the phenomenal reality of the world and the individuals in it, and also for providing a legitimate object for the religious consciousness, which demands the very highest form of reality as the only fit object of love,

But this is only a concession to religious consciousness, which has a certain value in the state of our bondage. The strictly theoretical consciousness has no need of an external God to create a world. The only creation it admits is the creation of ignorance and error. The person therefore who sees a world is the person who creates what he sees. His world may include a God. In that case, God is his own projection. In other words, the individual has created his God, and then he adores Him. Nothing whatsoever is *imposed* upon him absolutely and from the outside. The postulate of God is thus, on purely theoretical grounds, *dispensable*. Religious conciousness no doubt demands it; and the demand is humanly legitimate and beneficial. But then there are forms of error which are also beneficial, because they more easily lead one beyond themselves to truth. Religious consciousness has a value in this sense; but then, like everything *māyik*, it has got to be transcended in the end.

It may be argued here that the religious consciousness too is in some sense a truth-consciousness. After all man is not mere cognition. The Absolute of cognition is only one form of the Absolute. Here the object is all-important. The subject merely conforms to objective reality. A second form of the Absolute would be the Absolute of Feeling. This is joy infinite. Here both the subject and the object make equal contribution to the unity of the two. We may call it, in religious terminology, the marriage of the individual soul to the Divine Soul. In purer and purer joy, the object and the subject melt into one mass of joyful feeling, and all subject-object distinctions are absorbed and abolished. The experience of love, particularly in the religious sphere, leads on, through slow grades, to this kind of the Absolute. A God of love who can be loved can thus figure as the essential part of the Absolute Experience. The third form of the Absolute is the Absolute of will. Here the subject is all important and it completely determines the object. We find it pre-eminently in moral activity. The freedom of the subject is achieved gradually by freeing the subject from

thraldom to the object. The Absolute here will be the Subject as Freedom.

We now contend that the Absolute is one thing, while the different forms of what is called Absolute Experience are a different thing. Every experience, however perfected by the logic of its own inner nature and development, is a mental affair. It is a product of māyā by Vedāntic reasoning. It has got to be transcended. When the subject-object relationship in all its forms is annulled, all experience, whether relative or absolute, is annulled. What is left over is the Absolute, without distinctions of any kind or relations of any kind. Advaita Vedanta has made a study of this Absolute, and found that it is not any experience, but it is *being* in the form of the Self; and the Self by its very nature is both Infinite Joy and Infinite Freedom, the other two forms of the Absolute mentioned above. While therefore the Absolute is the indivisible unity of all those ideals which we seek to realize through cognition, feeling and will, the Absolute in Itself has no forms or aspects. Forms and aspects are ours, and they have got to be transcended. They are best transcended not through feeling or through will, but through the knowledge of non-duality. For while knowledge of the Truth automatically shapes both feeling and will, by cancelling all duality in this case, neither feeling nor will can shape knowledge to the knowledge of non-duality, which is the ideal of truth.

It may perhaps be argued, in justification of the ultimate validity of the religious consciousness, that at the final stage the subject-object relationship is transcended even in Feeling; and so feeling ceases to be feeling, — it becomes the Absolute. But then we no longer have alternative forms of the Absolute, but only the Absolute. Not only that. While cognition can put us in possession of the Absolute Truth *and then cancel itself as illusory in character,* feeling cannot do that. Feeling can mechanically transcend its own form, if at all; it cannot knowingly cancel itself. Knowledge is in this sense in a pre-eminent position. It alone can cancel all duality, nothing

else can. Feeling is blind in this respect. Its natural tendency is to exalt and to glorify the object of love, namely God in this case.

It is a plausible argument of some that the Absolute of Feeling is the same Absolute as the Absolute of Knowledge, and that only the paths are different. But since feeling of love is based upon the *wrong notion* of a real object of love, the error is likely to continue right to the end. We shall not leave the realm of duality. The path of knowledge is therefore the only safe and sure path. When ignorance is dispelled for good, there is no possibility of reverting to the ways of untruth and error. We are no longer under the bondage of duality. It is real and final deliverance from all forms of evil.

CHAPTER XLII

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

All knowledge is supposed to be in the interest of sucessful activity. Knowledge which has no relation to activity and which does not directly or indirectly promote it is supposed to be as good as useless. The needs of life naturally come uppermost. Knowledge must help to fulfil these needs. It is perhaps not possible to argue that knowledge by itself is valueless. It certainly enlarges one's vision and deepens one's understanding of things; and this gives a certain inner satisfaction which is quite valuable in itself. But it can be argued that this value is limited. There are always only a few men who are interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The majority of men are practical-minded. They are not visionaries or pure intellectuals. Besides, knowledge which does not lead to the improvement of conditions of life in general can only have a personal value, not social value. Science, for instance, has decidedly a great social value. That is why it occupies a pre-eminent position among all other species of knowledge.

It is possible that there is also such a thing as philosophical knowledge. But its benefit is likely to be more personal than social. The benefit to society can only be indirect; for the philosopher is after all a member of a society, and his gain is also the gain of the society. It may be that the pursuit of philosophy induces in the philosopher a certain rational, dispassionate and synoptic attitude towards all things. It may be that philosophy supplies a set of ideas or ideals which have a direct relevance to the life of man. It may also be (although this is a little more doubtful), that a philosopher does obtain some kind of higher knowledge which transforms his life, which in turn affects and influences other members of society. But all these benefits appear to be more or less impalpable or spiritual. What is quite evident

is that philosophy, unlike science, bakes no bread. It does not improve the material conditions of life. It is in this sense useless and valueless.

In the context of Indian philosophy, the controversy as to the relative merits of knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*karma*) has a long tradition. In the Vedic literature, the portion called *pûrva-mīmāṁsā* is mainly concerned with what is called *dharma* or religious duty. The philosophers of action think that this is the most important part of the Vedas, because it tells us categorically what to do and what not to do. In the last and concluding part of the Vedas, namely Upaniṣads, there are only descriptions of what is supposed to be the Highest Reality or Brahman. Since this kind of knowledge of a transcendent reality has no use for us, we must subordinate this part of the Vedas to the earlier part which bears on action, and interpret it as involving an indirect reference to the latter. Briefly, any kind of knowledge which does not directly or indirectly bear on action is quite useless; and therefore the last part of the Vedas or the Vedanta, which proposes to give us mere and pure knowledge of Brahman, may properly be regarded as the dumping ground of all the trivialities and the leavings of the action-part of the Vedas.

The philosophers of Vedanta reverse these values. For them action is subordinate to knowledge. It can only prepare the mind for knowledge. Action by itself can never lead to any lasting good of man. All the effects of action are necessarily short-lived. We may perhaps be able to earn merit. But all that this can achieve for us will be some temporary happiness, here or in the hereafter. When however we have fully enjoyed the fruit of our actions in a possible heaven, we shall have to begin our journey afresh. There can be no end to this journey by the method of action.

A question may be asked here: Cannot disinterested activity realize for us a goal that is permanent and eternal? Can we not realize the Absolute of the will in this way? We contend that in the absence of true knowledge, even dis-

interested activity can become a trap. It will give rise to a new desire, the desire for disinterested activity itself. If any such desire remains, we are still in the bondage of desire. We are not completely disinterested, and the goal cannot be reached. If this desire too is suppressed, it will be through some other effort and some other desire. No desire, no effort. How shall we be free from desire? To achieve disinterestedness, some kind of effort is the only method open to us. We may suppose that somehow we shall be able to keep the golden mean between all desires, and thus stay disinterested. But after all, even if it were possible, it would be through a certain effort of the will. How can it be *an eternal state of being*? To achieve this state of being, the will and the individuality must be permanently annulled. They can only be annulled through the knowledge of the Absolute Truth, which will reduce them to mere illusory appearances. Complete disinterestedness is not possible till then.

A doubt might arise about the activity called divine love or *bhakti*. This may have its endless joys, and nothing may appear to be superior to the joy of love. But this too cannot stay permanent. Separation and union, longing and the fulfilment of longing are part of it. Even if the ultimate union with God is achieved, it is a union of two distinct entities sustained through a certain effort of the will. But two different entities can never *really become one*. If they are united, they will fall apart again. Things that are apart in reality can never be made one through any possible method. All the heavenly joys of the theist and the moralist are, in our view, perishable. Only Eternity is Eternal. The only way to realize it is knowledge, not action.

Knowledge does nothing but drive out ignorance. If the being of Brahman is blissful, and if the Self of man is in eternal identity with Brahman, the goal that we are seeking to realize is already in our possession. The sorrows of finitude are the sorrows of ignorance only. Once this ignorance is removed, nothing divides us from our goal.

It is said that the wages of sin are sorrow and death. According to Advaita Vedanta, the Self is by its very nature free from sin (*ātmā-apahat-pāpmā*). As a matter of fact, it is not even an actor. It becomes an actor through ignorance only, i.e. by falsely identifying itself with the body and the mind. It is this finite individual (*jīvātman*), the result of the identification, that may be said to commit sin and to suffer the punishment for the same. If ignorance then is removed, sin itself is removed, and with it all suffering. We are by nature blissful and immortal. Only ignorance divides us from it. Advaita Vedanta is therefore very emphatic that we can get to the goal of our life through knowledge alone, not through action of any kind or virtuous deeds.

But is not knowledge itself an act or acievement? That it certainly is, and we must recognise the fact. It is however an act that reveals the Eternal, and then cancels itself. It is an occurrence within *māyā* that dissolves *māyā*. It is the logic of one thorn extracting another stuck in the flesh, or a dream-occurrence dissolving the dream itself. It is also to be noted that although knowledge occurs, there is no activity within knowledge itself. Knowledge only *holds up* or *reveals*. There is activity prior to knowledge when we are adjusting the instruments of knowledge, and there is activity after knowledge when we are trying to put our knowledge to use. There is no activity within knowledge as such, which is a revealing of reality whole and entire. To know is to stop acting. Knowledge can thus achieve for us what is permanent and eternal (*jñānāt-eva-tû-kaīvalyam*).

It is not contended by us that religious duty and devotion to God have no place in the knowlege of the Truth. In fact, they have a necessary place, but a subordinate place. If we do all our duties in a spirit of disinterestedness and dedication to God, we not only become free from the bondage of action, but we also achieve something of more positive value. This is inner purification and a desire for the knowledge of Brahman or *Brahma jijñāsā*. When this desire has become powerful enough, all duties automatically fall away.

They have fulfilled their purpose. The all-important process of knowledge is now bound to take precedence over action, and replace it completely in course of time. Duties then become an obstruction. They must be got rid of. They unnecessarily distract the mind and divert the energies of the true seeker. In other words, duties have a place in the spiritual discipline of knowledge, but a place that must gradually give way to the more intensive and contemplative processes of knowledge as such. A man who has not risen above duties and renounced all goals of action, mentally at least, cannot hope to succeed in the arduous and difficult discipline of knowledge.

There are some philosophers who give equal value to action and knowledge (*jñāna-karma-sumuccaya*). They argue that knowledge and action are like the two wings of a bird. A bird cannot rise in the air on one wing only. Both are equally important and necessary. The view expounded by us is somewhat different. Action is no doubt necessary for knowledge. But it is subordinate to the actual discipline of knowledge proper. When the desire for knowledge becomes intense, renunciation of action or *karma-sanyās* becomes a necessity. All religion, in this sense, leads up to and ends in knowledge. Knowledge is thus the crowning phase of the religious endeavour, both moral and devotional. It alone takes us out of the realm of duality and illusion to the realm of non-duality and truth. When all other duties are terminated, the duty of knowledge begins. And so the scripture says "Truth is to be heard (*śrotavyaḥ*), reflected upon (*mantavyaḥ*) and contemplated (*nididhyāsītavyaḥ*)". All these activities end in knowledge. This knowledge depends upon the will only to the extent of the afore-mentioned activities; but so far as its own nature is concerned, it is not the will that plays any part, it is the presence of the required *sāmagrī* or subjective and objective factors, or co-presence of the object with the subject. Knowledge thus differs from action in an important sense. Action is essentially subjective, while knowledge reveals the object and is controlled by the object.

CHAPTER XLIII

ADVAITA VEDANTA AND THE MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It is generally held that all human beings have a moral consciousness. The distinction between right and wrong is as natural to human beings as the distinction between red and blue. There is indeed some difference. The distinction between red and blue is normally drawn by all men at the same point. It is not so with regard to the distinction of right and wrong. All men do not draw the line with the same exactitude at the same place. A form of behaviour which one man regards as right may appear to another as just the opposite. Again, a form of behaviour which a man regards as quite right under one set of circumstances may appear to him as just wrong under a different set of circumstances. There is evidently no unanimity.

It may perhaps be argued nevertheless that moral distinctions are not only inevitable for all normally constituted persons, but that the right is right absolutely and in iself, and the wrong too is wrong absolutely and in itself. Their distinction is as much objective as the distinction of red and blue. Only human beings are not properly trained in the distinction. Moral distinctions are not as crude as sensible distinctions. They require for their perception a certain level of intelligence, education and culture. Persons of the same cultural level will find no difficulty in agreeing about the dividing lines and recognising the objectivity of the moral distinctions in the same way as they recognise sensible distinctions at a lower level.

We can all agree, for instance, that speaking truth is right and falsehood wrong, that keeping a promise is right and not keeping it wrong, that saving life is right and destroying it wrong, that justice is right and injustice wrong,

etc. This is conventional morality recognised by all men. There are thus certain virtues of man as man, and their opposites are the vices of man or what may be called sins in the language of religion. This morality may be called the morality of man as man or *mānava-dharma*. It is a purely ethical religion based upon the relevant faculties of man. Man may be said to have a moral faculty or a moral sense. It may not be equally well developed in all men; but it can be so developed through proper education.

A question naturally arises here: Is the moral sense a natural gift or the result of education? It will perhaps be argued that the moral sense is part of the inner constitution of man as man. It is only *elicited* through education. But, evidently, it is equally well arguable that it is *implanted* in the mind through education. We *learn* to make moral distinctions. We learn to call one type of behaviour right and another type of behaviour wrong. That is all there is in it. It all depends upon what we learn.

What cannot be denied is that moral distinctions are not *natural* or *innate* to the individual,—they are a gift to the individual from the society. It is the society that is originally in possession of them, and it is the society that initiates the individual into this new and non-natural sphere of experience. Once initiated, the individual begins to function on the basis of his newly-acquired capacity as though it was an original gift of nature to him. If a particular kind of education is given, the individual begins to draw the line in a particular place, and his so-called moral sense sees it just there. If a different kind of education is given, the individual begins to draw the line in a different place, and his moral sense follows suit. Briefly put, our moral sense sheepishly follows our moral education.

It cannot be doubted that society is prior to the individual, and also that the individual comes to be morally educated by the society. But how does society itself develop its moral sense or come into possession of knowledge about moral matters? One explanation is that the process is

purely empirical and naturalistic. It is empirical, because the method by which society comes to make moral distinctions is the method of trial and error. It is naturalistic, because society has found certain forms of conduct as making for greater social cohesion, harmony and well-being. There is nothing sacrosanct therefore about moral virtues. It is but natural that the social code of conduct should change with the special conditions of every age. There cannot be any fixity about it. In point of fact also, we find that the morality of one age is quite different from the morality of another, and the morality of one people different from the morality of another. Moral distinctions are relative, not absolute.

Another explanation is that every morally-oriented society carries back its history to some point in the past of special moral eminence which prescribes certain standards for all time. This moral eminence has reference to a great personality and to a great revelation from above. The authority of the person or the revelation is not to be questioned. The code of conduct thus prescribed has what may be called super-natural or divine authority behind it. It is a sacred authority, not to be compared to a purely human or social authority. It is above society, and society has got to accept it. The moral geniuses and leaders, who rebel against the authority of the society of their times, derive their whole inspiration and strength from this higher source. We can now argue, on the basis of this origin of all morals, that God has implanted the distinction of right and wrong in our hearts, or that conscience is the voice of God in us, etc. Society has educated us in the sacred tradition, and that has become the voice of God in us. The untutored mind knows nothing about this voice. Morality, thus derived, will not be relative, but absolute. It becomes the expression of a super-sensible and spiritual order of things which takes precedence over all this-worldly considerations of human beings in society. Society as well as true human well-being are governed in the end by a superior law or the law of God or *dharma.*

There are moral philosophers who want to avoid both these forms of explanation. Morality for them is neither a matter of social well-being or happiness, nor a matter of the super-sensible and super-human authority of religion safeguarding our more lasting and other-worldly interests. It has a field of its own. The moral sphere is quite unique. It has nothing to do with hedonism and utilitarianism, for these cannot explain the 'ought' of morality. Religion indeed can; for religion is essentially authoritarian. But it is contended that moral consciousness is wider and more universal than religious consciousness. Not all men need have a religion. But all men do have a morality. Religion and morality are two separate spheres of human experience, and there is no necessary relation between them. Morality is quite possible without religion, although religion is not possible without some kind of morality. What is important to note is that moral distinctions are *sui generis*. They cannot be derived from anything else. We must commit neither the naturalistic fallacy, nor the super-naturalistic fallacy. Moral values are ultimate and irreducible.

We do not agree with this view. That we do distinguish our moral experience from the experience of pain and pleasure on the one hand and from the injunctions and prohibitions of the scripture on the other may be admitted. But appearances can be deceptive. Morality can have a religious source or a secular source, although we may not be conscious of it.

Let us consider the question of obligation in this connection. Moral distinctions are supposed to carry with them a certain obligation to act. How do we account for it? To act is a matter of the will. Unless the will is moved by an appropriate motive, it will remain quiescent. The only thing that moves the will is either some form of self-interest (egoistic hedonism), or social interest (utilitarianism), or other-worldly interest (*dharma*). When we say that the will can be moved by *pure moral considerations*, there is still an aim behind it. It is moral exaltedness or holiness.

This is only an interest of a higher order, which is based upon scriptural teaching and which has for its goal some form of self-realization, however this is understood. If we exclude all religion, we as a matter of fact exclude every interest which morality can serve.

How then do we account for moral obligation? Even if we have a direct intuition of what is morally right and what is morally wrong, would that awareness contain any motive for doing the one and avoiding the other? Cognition has a necessary reference to a state of things or a factual situation. I can have a cognition of what the society or the scripture commends or condemns, holds as good or as bad. I can have a cognition of what is prescribed or prohibited by some authoritative agency accepted by me. But the *source of the obligation* is not in any cognitive experience which I have, but in those considerations of self-interest or loyalty which we have enumerated above. A free agent is only moved by a purpose or interest. It is therefore always legitimate to ask, why should I do what is conventionally taken to be right and what I too recognise as such? It is no answer to this question to say,—because it is perceived to be the right. All that we can perceive is that some agency has prescribed it. It is quite a different matter whether I should accept the prescription of the agency in question and what are my own reasons for the acceptance. There is in this sense no purely objective morality to which I must unquestioningly submit. If there is anything of the sort, it is the morality prescribed by the scripture, which is a non-human and divine authority, which is supposed to safeguard our very best interests both here as well as in the hereafter, and to which *most of us give unconditional allegiance.*

In this connection we might say that the only thing that is ultimately valuable and so good for us is pleasure or some form of it which is completely satisfying. Of this good, we can have roughly two levels, — those things which are *naturally desired* by all men as good things of this life, and which can be enjoyed in this body here and now (*preya*), and

those things which may not be so enjoyed but which are promised by religion as the higher joys of a more abundant and more satisfying life in the hereafter (*śreya*). In addition to these two common goals of activity, namely *kāma* and *dharma,* there is the supreme goal of Absolute Freedom or eternal joy of a transcendent character called *mokṣa.* Briefly put, *kāma* (pleasure) and *artha* (good things of life) represent naturalistic value, while *dharma* (religious duty) and *mokṣa* (Freedom) represent non-naturalistic value. It would be a travesty of truth to suppose that when we say that *pleasure is good,* pleasure has a non-naturalistic quality of goodness. Pleasure is not good in the same sense in which speaking the truth is good; and it would be quite wrong to suppose that both have the same non-naturalistic quality of goodness. To save the unique character of the value-concept of goodness, we illegitimately upgrade pleasure and down-grade virtue.

It will be noted that there is a perpetual conflict between the objects of desire (*preya*) and our religious duty (*śreya*). The latter invariably seeks to curb our natural desires, regulate them and control them. It may in this sense be said to give the law of the spirit. It is the higher law which safeguards our true good and ultimate happiness. So far as is known, the scripture is the *only* non-natural source of this law. There is no ethical experience that can take its place. If we do not accept the scripture, the only rational way open to us would be to regulate our conduct by the law of enlightened self-interest. It is morality based upon the pleasure-principle modified by the reality-principle. Reason gives us a code of morality based upon common and natural interests.

Indeed reason can do something more. It can regulate not only our life in society, but also our inner personal life. The natural man lives at the level of his instincts, desires and passions. A rational man brings order here and lives a rational life. A rational life is a balanced or harmonious life, where every legitimate desire can be satisfied within limits. But for that very reason, the over-all direction of

such a life is still towards maximum happiness. No new principle of morality comes into operation.

Some philosophers argue that man is essentially rational; and so reason *by itself* can supply him with a code of morality. But this is very far-fetched. Man is not only rational, but he is also animal. The driving force of his life comes from his animal nature, not from his rational nature. Reason by itself cannot tell us what to do. It cannot give us a positive morality. It can only give us a negative morality. If I have a natural propensity to speak falsehood, reason will say,—do not speak falsehood. It will do good neither to you nor to the society. If I have a natural propensity to misappropriate money, it will say,—do not steal, and so on. Reason can thus give the "don'ts" of life. A purely rational being will not know what to do or what to avoid. He will have no morality. Reason is at its best in giving its verdict, on the basis of past experience, about particular courses of action,—whether the consequences will be desirable or not quite so desirable. It cannot set positive ideals and positive goals of action. These it takes for granted as part of individual's personal loyalties or accepted set of values.

It is sometimes held that morality refers only to a set of values, having a certain characteristic. A person in a civilised society has certain *personal* desires and also certain *impersonal* desires. The latter have reference to all men. They are desires which all men *ought to have*. A person, for instance, can have the desire that all men ought to seek peace. Such a desire then becomes moral. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that people do have these impersonal, and what they may even love to call 'rational', desires. But will all people have the same impersonal desires? Clearly, all desires are subjective in their origin; and different people will have different sets of desires. If there are some people who count the virtues of peace, there are others who exalt war and its ennobling effects. If all these conflicting sets of values become automatically moral, there will

be moral chaos. If, besides, every-one holds to his convictions with the force of a moral law, there will be no end to disharmony and friction.

We return to our original thesis,—there is no such thing as *ethical obligation* par excellence. What is so termed is invariably a part of religion, at least in its origin. Take away all its connection with religion, and ethical obligation falls to the ground. There is a lot of sense in speaking not of morality in general, but of Hindu morality, Christian morality, Muslim morality, etc. The virtues or the schemes of life emphasised by different scriptures give the moral law to different religious and social groups. There may be common virtues too,—but the emphasis on them is likely to be somewhat different in different schemes. What is certain is that we can give no meaning to the *categorical imperative* of Ethics, if we do not accept the authority of any religious revelation. Outside this authority, all our acts can only subserve the lower ends of desire and self-interest.

In Indian philosophy, there is no independent science of Ethics. Ethics is part and parcel of religion. Religion itself is divided into two parts. The part concerning *action* is the lower part, and is called *dharma-shāstra;* the part concerning *knowledge* of the truth is the higher part, and is called *mokṣa-shāstra.* Action can at best lead to heavenly bliss, which will be proportionate to the quality and the quantum of the merit earned. There will be no Freedom from embodied existence as such. Even the different heavens require some kind of subtle body for the enjoyment that is appropriate to them. It is still existence dominated by ignorance and therefore transmigration or *saṁsāra.* It is only the knowledge of the Truth that can dissolve for good the knot of the intelligent Self and the unintelligent body in all its forms. That is the goal of Advaita Vedanta.

The question now arises,—but is the supreme knowledge of Truth possible without the performance of religious duties? The Advaitic view is that it is not possible. Action is unavoidable for the embodied being. The only right action

is the action enjoined by the scripture. Every-one must do the duties peculiar to his station in life; and these duties must be performed without any desire for their fruit or for the joys of heaven. He must continue to do these duties till the *desire for the knowledge of Brahman* takes hold of him. It is then only that he can give up his duties. They have done their part. There is no further use of them. The only duty that remains is the pursuit of the redeeming knowledge. The desire for knowledge then or *Brahmajijñāsā,* which only comes at the end of an active life of religious duty, is the first stage in the journey towards Absolute Freedom. Where conventional religion ends, Advaita proper begins. It begins with the desire to know.

The second stage is listening to the truth or *śravaṇa.* This is best done by going to a qualified person,—a true *Guru,*—who has already traversed the whole way to Truth. This will give the aspirant his first knowledge of the truth. It will be quite direct, because the truth propounded is direct and immediate. But doubts of a substantive nature will still remain. The only doubts removed by *śravaṇa* will be formal doubts about the meaning and the interpretation of scriptural statements. Unless *all* doubts are removed, truth will not bear its fruit in the life of the seeker.

The third stage arrives with the elimination of all those doubts which derive from our common experience. It is the stage of *manana* or testing the truth of scriptural statements in experience. This is philosophy proper. All the relevant doubts can be raised and resolved through an analysis of experience. It is the process of midwifery through which truth is born. Truth must be seen to be true; and it cannot be seen to be true, unless the mind is free from doubt. The religious faith of the second stage is thus transformed into real knowledge at the third stage.

Something however still remains to be done for the perfection of knowledge. This takes us to the fourth stage. The habits of past life and past thinking do not go easily, and we unconsciously slip into error again and again. These

habits have got to be rooted out; and they cannot be rooted out at the first glimmer of the truth. We must get well-established in the truth. For this purpose, the mind must first be stabilised. Wrong habits and false ideas, which keep us wayward, must be countered by true ideas, right understanding and right feeling. More than that. We must resort to a process of intensive spiritual culture or meditation. The very sub-conscious is in this way transformed and made to respond to the conscious awareness of the truth. This is called *nididhyāsana.* We seek here, through persistent efforts, to *live* in the truth and literally *to be* the truth. Knowledge becomes perfect. Nothing is left to be done. Life and action respond to the higher wisdom. We are perfectly free.

The spiritual evolution of the individual should really stop here. There is nothing left to be achieved—for there is nothing higher. But the emancipated one has still a body. He cannot therefore be altogether free from the suffering that is natural to the body. He is *mukta* (emancipated), but not *jivan-mukta* (enjoying the fullest joy of Freedom in the body itself). Those who desire this have still three stages to go. They have reference to a kind of *yoga,* or the degree of contemplative absorption in the Truth called *samādhi.*

The fifth stage is accordingly a degree of absorption in the Truth in which the individual becomes quite oblivious to the world and its impact upon the body. But he retains the power to freely go into *samādhi* and freely come out of it. His individual initiative in the matter is not wholly gone. He does come out of *samādhi.* When he does that, the unadulterated joy of the Self is to a certain extent replaced by faint this-worldly concern and distraction, which are the result of a trace of ignorance.

When this contemplative process deepens further, a new stage is reached. At this stage, the sixth stage, the individual retains his freedom only to the extent of getting into

samādhi. But he is so lost to himself in that state that he does not retain the power to come out of it. At best he retains just a shadow of his individuality, which is simultaneously in the body and in the Truth. While therefore he cannot come out of *samādhi* of his own free will which he has ceased to exercise, he can be made to come out of it through the initiative of another person. He is to that extent not wholly lost to the world,—he can be reclaimed for it, if it is so desired.

The last and the seventh stage is reached when the absorption is so complete and thorough that neither he can return of his own accord nor can he be made to return through the efforts of another. *He has reached the point of no-return.* He is dead to the world for all purposes. We can do nothing with him, and he has nothing to do with us. His individuality is literally replaced by the consciousness of unity.

Morality in Advaita Vedanta prepares the ground for knowledge, and gives the necessary qualification for it. There its function is over. The Highest can only be reached through knowledge. But knowledge, being a human affair, is capable of refinement and perfectibility. The goal is Perfect Freedom in life or *jīvan-mukti.*

CHAPTER XLIV

MORALITY BEFORE AND AFTER KNOWLEDGE

We said, in the last chapter, that all duties prescribed by the scripture have got to be performed disinterestedly in order to earn the qualification and the desire for the knowledge of Brahman. These are mostly social duties which safeguard the stability of society and also the integrity of the individual as a member of society. But these social duties do not go very far. They do not bring about the inner purification of the individual which is more important for his spiritual evolution. For this, a pure and virtuous life is necessary. It is the inner morality or the morality of the spirit. It easily takes precedence over outer behaviour in society. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

These personal virtues (*śīla*) are many. Truth, non-violence, purity (*brahmacharya*), and non-possession of wealth are some of them. But what is more important than even these virtues are certain basic attitudes. These control all other virtues, and at the same time they prepare the mind for knowledge. They may be enumerated as follows: (a) Withdrawal of the external senses and the inner mind from all objects (*śama, dama*). When the senses and the mind are under control, objects cease to distract. It is a kind of negation of the world and all its values, on the moral plane. We shut out the world as something alien to our true happiness and well-being. We have inner peace. (b) We may control the senses and the mind; but if we do not control desire, the cause of our restlessness will remain. We must therefore withdraw from desire and all objects of desire (*uparati*). This will give us a more lasting peace and equanimity.

(c) We are, generally speaking, easily upset by changes in our physical situation. This is inimical to intensive spiritual culture. We must cultivate the power of not complaining, and putting up bravely and stoically with physical discomforts, such as hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and all kinds of painful situations (*titikṣā*). We keep our equilibrium, as far as possible, in changing conditions of life.

(d) No great thing can be achieved in the spiritual sphere without a strong faith in the instruments of our enlightenment (*śraddhā*). These instruments are the scripture, the spiritual guide or *Guru* and God. A man cannot rise to great spiritual heights by his unaided efforts.

(e) All the above-mentioned virtues are bound to lead to a finer perception of truth-values (*sat-asat-vastu-viveka*). Without this perception and a discriminating understanding, falsehood would appear like truth, and vice-versa. Our thinking would remain confused, and we would not know where to draw the line between truth and falsehood. We need to develop a capacity like that of the proverbial swan who can separate milk from water.

(f) The crowning phase of all virtues on the *moral plane* is a positive distaste for all conceivable joys both here as well as in the hereafter (*vairāgya*). It alone can give us a foretaste of the joy of non-duality. We must renounce all joys of embodied existence as mere forms of pain.

(g) The foregoing virtues all add up in the end to the single all-shadowing virtue of an intense desire for the knowledge of Brahman, which leads to Absolute Freedom (*mumukṣā*). We have no *natural desire* for freedom from embodied existence as such. It is a most sophisticated desire. We are naturally tempted by many varieties of joy, possible only in embodied existence. But what is that joy which baffles description and which is possible only to the pure spirit? It has little affinity with life as we know it, and great affinity with death as we seem to imagine it. It is death to our individuality and death to the world. It is life in the pure spirit only. Such is the desire for Freedom.

All the virtues mentioned above constitute the external means of knowledge. Knowledge in the fullest sense is not possible without them. But once we are in possession of them, the only thing we can next do is to take to the internal means of knowledge. This comprises *śravaṇa, manana* and *nididhyāsana.* We hear the truth from the proper sources, reflect upon experience in order to see the truth there, and finally we unite ourselves to the truth through a process of intensive meditation. When we are well-established in the truth, we are freed persons. Everything that could be achieved has been achieved, and nothing is left to be achieved. We could not add to our spiritual stature or the content of our life. We have reached the highest. Struggle, endeavour and frustration are all at an end. Man is fully self-fulfilled (*Kṛt-Kṛtya*). He is at peace with himself and at peace with the world. He has become the Life Universal.

Indeed, he does not shed his humanity as long as he lives in his body. But he is so internally detached from the world that he is almost a stranger to its concerns. He has no doubt to act on the physical human plane, but his real life is elsewhere. His actions therefore have very often the quality of "playing a part in a drama." The actor in a drama is fully aware that he is only acting a part temporarily assumed by him for a specific purpose, but that his real life is in the world of men and things outside the dramatic set-up. The same is true of the freed soul acting on the stage of human society.

A question may be asked here. What is the morality of the freed soul? If he has none, is he free to do what he likes? Can he afford to ignore the norms of morality accepted by the common man?

Our answer is that a freed soul is really *free.* He is above the law. In principle, he can do anything, and he will not have to pay the price. But while it is true that no sin can accrue to him, it is equally true that he is incapable of committing a sin or something that is repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. Ordinary morality entails the sense

of individual responsibility for acts and free choice. The free soul has transcended this level of ordinary morality. His egoistic formation has been almost liquidated, and he has ceased to think of himself as an actor. His real life is not in the world,—it is in the pure spirit. If therefore we find desire, or selfishness, or egotism in the constitution of a person, he is certainly not the freed soul.

The freed soul is intensely human. As a matter of fact, he combines in himself the best of humanity with divinity. He is rightly called a God-man. He may retreat into his Self, when he wants to be all God and nothing of man. But he may also come out of his retreat and act on the plane of humanity. And when he acts, he can only act in the best interests of all human beings and at the highest level of moral excellence. In truth, he does not borrow his standards of morality from the society. Rather he sets those standards to the society and the rest of mankind. He is the true moral instructor and guide for his fellow-men.

His own personal life is a paragon of beauty for others to imitate. He is not swayed by considerations of praise or ignominy, fear or hope, favour or disfavour, success or defeat, pain or pleasure, etc. He is free from all opposites. He is equable in all situations. He is always his own Self. It is but natural that his speech, his looks and his acts should convey the imperturbability and the peace of his mind. Since he lives in the full view of the truth, he can only act at a level where personal piety and compassionateness for suffering humanity become quite natural to him. The springs of his actions may be hidden from us, for they go deep down in a transcendent vision which he alone has; but clearly they can have nothing in common with the utilitarian considerations of a materialistic society or even with the more exalted desire for a heavenly abode of a man of religion. To help mankind in its struggle towards the supreme goal of Freedom is the one moving principle of all his activity among men.

The freed soul, as we said, has a dual nature,—divine and human. Both these characteristics express themselves in

his life. What he actually does however is very much dependent upon his temperamental peculiarities. He has nothing to gain, but only to give; and he chooses the way he wants to give. He may go about propagating and preaching the Truth for the spiritual uplift of all human beings. He may be content to settle down in one place without any overt activity of any kind. He may act or he may not act. Nothing prevents him from behaving as he chooses. He is his own master. His mere presence among men is a service of the highest kind to them. It cannot be compared to the service of all those social workers who seek to provide the necessities of life to their less fortunate brethren. After all service to man can be done at various different levels. The highest is that where the noblest needs are satisfied. That is what the freed soul cares for most. He satisfies those needs without the expenditure of any effort. For he is a truly contagious personality. The power of Truth in him easily communicates itself to those who come into contact with him. Like the sun, he sheds light, warmth and benevolence on all. What service can be more valuable or lasting?

Some learned men have argued that even the freed soul has an obligation. He cannot just retire from the world and live an entirely self-centred life or a life of pure contemplation. The society which has in various ways helped him to attain to his present state of exaltation has a natural claim upon him. It must be served in turn. No-one, however great, can get away from his duties to society. A spiritual man and a freed soul has even greater duties, because of his greater capacity to serve. He cannot, and must not, live in passivity and peace, while all around him is the darkness of ignorance, sorrow and death. Even a freed soul is therefore bound to lose something in stature if he does not respond to the call of service.

This is, in our opinion, a distorted view of the real nature of the state of freedom. That the freed soul does the greatest service to the scoiety in which he lives goes without saying. But it would be wholly wrong to think that there is any

kind of obligation upon him. He has obligation neither to man nor to God. There is simply no law above him which he has to obey. It is the man in bondage who is under a law. The Freed Soul is a law unto himself. Life in society and life in the forest make no difference to him. He knows that all values that can be created are part of a great illusion. The Eternal Value is the only real value. Values are therefore created only by deluded men and small men—not by those who know. As the awakened person does not desire to enter the discarded dream-land in order to put an end to the misery of the sufferers in it, even so the freed soul has no illusions about the real nature of the service he can render to society. He cannot possibly take social service very seriously. He can only take it as a sort of make-believe, or as just a human virtue in a purely human but delusive context. Social service for him is shorn of all that seriousness and that glory with which the social man has invested it. It is therefore most improper to argue that the Freed Soul has an obligation to society or that he can add to his stature through service.

It is important in this connection to remember that the saving knowledge leaves hardly any scope for real and purposeful activity. It cuts at the very root of all such activity. The freed soul does not regard himself as an actor. What activity he does is a mere accident of his human body. That body itself is only a fruition of certain past *karmas* called *prārabdha*. When these *karmas* have spent their force and death ensues, there is no more any body for the emancipated one. Till then activities have to be carried on to sustain life and to do the best for those sincere souls who seek help.

It cannot be doubted that morality after knowledge is the highest kind of morality; for it alone is truly and absolutely disinterested. It is service at the purely spiritual level and true universal love. Conventional morality, which is morality at the level of ignorance, is completely transcended here. The freed soul acts not with his ego, but as the Divine Life or the Universal Life within him directs him. He is merely the human tool of that life.

CHAPTER XLV

EPILOGUE

Indian philosophy comprises various different systems, some of them holding quite opposite views. There is the materialism of *Cārvāka* and the absolute nothingness or *śūnya* of Buddhism. There is the theism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Yoga and Vedanta, and the atheism of Sāṅkhya, Buddhism and Jainism. There is the rationalism of Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, and Buddhism, and the super-rationalism or mysticism of Vedanta. There is the Realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya, and the Idealism of Buddhist Yogācāra and Advaitism. There is the Relativism of Jainism and the Absolutism of Advaita and Mādhyamik Buddhism. But except *Cārvāka,* which is through and through materialistic, there is not a system which does not possess a spiritual outlook on life, and which does not accept the reality of the hereafter and a kind of self-realization for the soul. Embodied existence in general is deprecated, and the highest destiny of the soul is supposed to consist in a state of disembodiedness. Indian philosophy may in this sense be said to be essentially non-secular and spiritual. It shows the way to the realization of the highest spiritual values, however they may be conceived. It is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Knowledge must subserve a higher end,—and that end is self-realization.

Of all these systems, Buddhism, Jainism and Vedanta are perhaps the only ones which have given rise to organised religion, drawing its inspiration from a philosophical background. It is however only in Advaita Vedanta and Mādhyamik Buddhism that religion and philosophy meet perfectly and become indistinguishable from each other. These two systems retain the earnestness of a religious pursuit, but liquidate every dogma of religion in the interests of truth

pure and simple. Even the central concept of most religions, namely God, is here rejected.

It is generally held, and rightly, that the different systems of Indian philosophy, sometimes developed almost at the same time, constitute a logical ascent from the less satisfactory to the more and more satisfactory. At the bottom comes *Cārvāka,* with its pure materialism and denial of the soul as well as of the hereafter. Then comes Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which retains materialism so far as the external world is concerned, but adds to it a soul capable of knowledge and other intelligent activities, and also a God who is external to the world and who does not create it. Then comes Sāṅkhya-Yoga. This system refines upon the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of primordial matter, and substitutes *trividhā prakṛti* (*sattva,*, *rajas* and *tamas*) for *paramāṇu-vāda* (atomic reality). It also refines upon the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of spiritual reality or *ātman. Puruṣa* in the Sāṅkhya and allied systems is essentially of the nature of pure and self-effulgent intelligence. Lastly, we come to Vedanta, which dispenses with an independent and uncreated material substratum of the visible world, and makes the latter wholly dependent upon the spiritual reality of Brahman. This ascent culminates in Advaita Vedanta, which does away with the independent reality of the material world altogether, and which establishes a perfect unity of the individual soul (*jīvātmā*) and the Supreme Soul (*Paramātmā*). Buddhism has various different forms which fall all along the way of the logical ascent of Indian philosophy. Its highest form, which is *Mādhyamik Buddhism,* may be said to parallel Advaita Vedanta in its passion for unity and Absolutism.

The Indian tradition in philosophy has found its best and highest expression in Advaita Vedanta. The *impermanence* of all things and the *deceitful nature* of all appearances runs through all Hindu thinking about reality. There is visible also yearning for the permanent and the eternal. Advaita Vedanta is simply the culmination of this fundamental tendency. It contrasts sharply with western think-

ing in this respect. For the west, time is certainly real. There may or may not exist something that is eternal. But even if it exists, its reality must somehow comprehend, or at least be compatible with, the reality of time. Again, nothing that we sensibly know can be wholly unreal or illusory. As a matter of fact, the realm of the temporal and the sensible is the only realm of reality with which we are best acquainted and about which we can know something for certain.

This difference in attitude is due to different interests and differing ideals of knowledge. While the West has sought scientific knowledge in all the spheres of human experience for its beneficial effects on the human race,—the East has taken more avidly to that species of knowledge (*adhyātma vidyā*) which is supposed to lead to the consummation of the highest spiritual aspirations of man. Whether such division of interests between the East and the West is absolute or not may be questioned. But there is no denying the fact that these two tendencies,—the one seeking knowledge of external nature, man and society,—with a view to improving the lot of man in this life itself, and the other seeking knowledge of one thing only, namely the spiritual reality of the Self, to the exclusion of all other interests, are radically opposed to each other and even irreconcilable in the same society. The prevailing tendency in the philosophical circles of the West is towards empiricism and positivism and away from supernaturalism and spiritualism. The heart of traditional India is definitely with the latter. In between, there are many attitudes both in the East and in the West, with the result that the differences sometimes become blurred and almost invisible.

There are persons who do not accept any opposition between empirical science and the supernaturalism of religion. They think, it is possible to garner the fruits of both, so that we can improve human lot in this world itself, and at the same time keep up a lively sense of spiritual values, which can be developed side by side and which will safeguard our highest spiritual well-being. We think that this hope is

misplaced. There is a conflict of interests and a conflict of methods. Once we accept the possibility of a science of the Spirit, there is bound to be a trans-valuation of all our present-day scientific values. There is also a clear difference of method which is bound to affect the truth of the one or the other. Both cannot have truth in the same sense.

Advaita Vedanta does not come into conflict with physical and social sciences. They have a field of their own in which they are quite autonomous. But it leaves them behind as of little value. It goes forward to the ultimate truth by its own logic. Those who accept its logic cannot stop half-way. The goal is only reached when every position has been liquidated. Truth is not a positive thesis or even a synthesis. It is the negation of every thesis. It is no position at all. It is just Truth itself.

Philosophy is done in many ways and from many different standpoints. Sometimes there is hardly any meeting point between the different systems. According to the Indian way of doing philosophy, the best way to judge a system is to consider its concept of the *spirit* in general, and the concept of the Self in particular. It is on this basis alone that different systems can be graded as higher or as lower. Our contention has been that the Advaitic concept of the Self is truest to experience and the most revealing. All other systems find their place in the hierarchy as they come nearer and nearer to the Advaitic view. While therefore the concept of the Self plays a decisive part in Indian philosophy, empirical sciences and the advances which they have made hardly play any part at all. This is quite unlike Western philosophy which is rooted in science and grows with it. To know the Self, the ultimate pre-supposition of all facts, we have not to look *out*. Looking out is looking the wrong way. We have to look discriminatingly *within*. Philosophy thus becomes a form of transcendental psychology, which looks beyond the mind.

There are persons who think that philosophy is not a species of *seeing*, but a species of *thinking*. So far as thinking

knowledge is concerned, scientific truths are the only proven or demonstrated truths. If philosophy is to have a modicum of truth, it must build on these truths of science. If, however, it is allowed to drift freely on the speculative currents of thought and without any checks of science, it will merely build beautiful castles in the air, which will have a certain aesthetic value, but none in cold logic. Philosophy should therefore aim at a certain extension and refinement of science. It is only in this sense that it may be called a science of sciences.

This is a view of philosophy which, in our opinion, reduces it to a pale and useless shadow of science. It will hardly have a field of its own, distinct from science. If it attempts a world-view based on the truths of science, it can only add to these truths in the realm of *phantasy*. Imagination in science is checked by facts and has a truth-value. Imagination in philosophy, at whatever level, is just mere imagination. It has no truth-value.

Philosophy in Advaita Vedanta has nothing to do with the abstractions called facts. It goes straight to experience, analyses it, interprets it, and evolves a new and deeper meaning in it. It is thus purely a spiritual activity. Facts of science fall within it but only as bracketed, and so considered unimportant. They are facts *to the intelligent spirit,* not facts *in themselves*. The intelligent spirit, however, is related to nothing and is relative to nothing. It is the only thing that is really in itself. It is Absolute Being. We cannot know this Being in the objective attitude, but only through the negation of every form of objectivity and subjectivity. It is in this sense a direct knowledge of Being-in-Itself or the Absolute Spirit.

The Asolute Spirit may be said to have many levels of subjectivity. The subject at one level is object to a higher level. The highest level is the level where the subject is subject only and never an object. It illumines the mind, and through the mind the rest of the world. It is the Light that lighteth all things. It can only be known directly,

because it is by its very nature *immediate.* There is no other way of knowing the Spirit. Philosophy is therefore direct knowledge or it is nothing at all.

If we accept this view of philosophy, science can have nothing to do with it. Science studies the relative, philosophy the Absolute. Scientific truths are all hypothetical, the truth of philosophy has apodictic certainty. Science speculates, Philosophy tries to see. All these ideals are completely fulfilled in Advaita Vedanta. We may therefore rightly say that philosophy is the crown of all the sciences, and Advaita Vedanta is the crown of all philosophical knowledge.

There is a mania for progress in all kinds of knowledge these days. Since Indian philosophy in general, and Advaita Vedanta in particular, show no visible progress, many western-minded Indian philosophers condemn this kind of knowledge as anaemic and worthless. This view, in our opinion, is based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of philosophical activity. There can be progress where all we have to do is to speculate. There can be no finality here. It is different in philosophy where we merely analyse our experience and see the truth in it. If we do not accept a particular analysis, we may give a different and alternative analysis. Different people can thus simultaneously accept different analyses, each one sure of the truth as he sees it. There is no way of proving any-one of them to be in the wrong; for there are no facts outside experience to which we can appeal. Philosophical truth is thus by its very nature static and timeless. You either accept it or do not accept it. But you cannot change it by any amount of reasoning. It represents a way of analysing experience and a way of seeing things as a whole. This however does not mean that there is no ultimate philosophical truth or that we cannot rise to it by gradual steps of a wider vision and a more penetrating analysis. The ultimate will be that which resolves all problems that arise within experience, and that leaves no room for doubt or speculation. Briefly put, philosophy is not

theorisation; it is just a species of seeing or attending to an ever-present truth which is hidden from us through lack of thought or ignorance. The name *darśan* (direct seeing) in Sanskrit for different schools of philosophical thought is quite expressive in this respect. Philosophy is a *darśan* and not a *vāda* (logic).

Western philosophy follows the methods and the ideals of western science; but unlike the latter, it has very little social value. It can give the individual some training in critical and dispassionate thinking. It may also give a certain intellectual satisfaction. But its utility stops there. There is no positive content in it which can either raise the level of physical comfort or give any spiritual satisfaction capable of transforming all the values of life. In this respect, Advaita Vedanta contrasts very strongly with western philosophy. It holds up a transcendent value before us,—freedom from all pain and sorrow of life and the achievement of the very highest possible joy of being. Western philosophy would consider such an ideal as simply fantastic. Knowledge, according to it, is to be sought for its own sake; and it is a growing knowledge, which has no end or goal. There can be no such thing as redeeming knowledge, which is only a phantasy. However that be, there is no doubt that such knowledge is the ideal of philosophy in India, and Advaita Vedanta seeks to fulfil it.

We have tried, in our humble way, to place the general outline of this most important system of Indian thought in the foregoing pages. The heart of Hindu India, which has seen many vicissitudes both on the physical plane as well as on the spiritual plane, is still firm in its estimation and love of the non-dualistic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. Those therefore who want to understand the real India, as distinguished from the secular India of the Western type, are likely to find something of interest in these pages.

